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SANCTUARY MEDITATIONS
FOR
PRIESTS AND FREQUENT COMMUNICANTS

Nihil obstat.

GULIELMUS CANONICUS GILDEA, S.T.D.,
Censor Deputatus.

Imprimatur.

HERBERTUS CARDINALIS VAUGHAN,
Archiepiscopus Westmonast.

Die 18 Decembris, 1899.

SANCTUARY MEDITATIONS

FOR

Priests and Frequent Communicants.

*SERVING AS A PREPARATION FOR, AT THE TIME OF, AND
THANKSGIVING AFTER RECEIVING THE HOLY
EUCHARIST.*

Translated from the Original Spanish

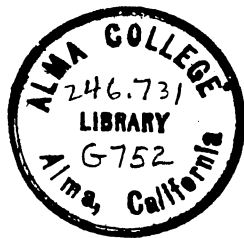
OF

FATHER BALTASAR GRACIAN,

Of the Society of Jesus (1669),

BY

MARIANA MONTEIRO.



R. & T. WASHBOURNE,

18 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON.

BENZIGER BROS.: NEW YORK, CINCINNATI AND CHICAGO.

1900.

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THIS TRANSLATION IS

Dedicated to

OUR BLESSED LADY, THE GREAT MOTHER
OF GOD,

UNDER HER GLORIOUS TITLE AND PRIVILEGE

OF THE

'HELP OF CHRISTIANS,'

BY THE LOWLIEST OF HER DEVOTED CHILDREN.

PREFACE TO THE TRANSLATION.

THE author of these Meditations, Father Baltasar Gracian, of the Society of Jesus, was born in Calatayud, in the kingdom of Aragon, Spain, and entered the Society in 1619, at the age of sixteen years. He bore an illustrious name, and that he was a man of much erudition is evident from the numerous works that were published by him, and which, as soon as they issued from the press, acquired a high repute even amongst foreigners, who delighted in the majesty and elegance of the Spanish language. He brought out all his works under the assumed name of his brother Lawrence, with the exception of his Meditations, which bore his own signature; the whole of his writings appeared simultaneously in two volumes, and have been translated into several languages.

He was Rector of the College of Tarragona, where his preaching, his deep knowledge, his subtle mind, great powers of observation and talents, soon acquired for him a great reputation. He died December 6, 1658.*

* *Vide* 'Bibliotheca Hispania Nova, Sive Hispaniorum Scriptorum qui ab Anno MD ad MDCLXXXIV florere Notitia,' Auctore D. Nicolao Antonio Hispalensi J. C., tomus secundus, p. 4 (1788).

In commencing the translation of different Spanish authors, I propose confining myself to such works as have been hitherto unknown, or scarcely known, in England, and therefore shall give in all future translations a little notice of their respective authors, feeling sure that they require but to be known to be appreciated, for although the works of a Quevedo, Cervantes, Lope de la Vega, Calderon de la Barca, Zorrilla, and a few others, are recognised as holding a high place of honour in English libraries, how few which treat on spiritual subjects (and their name is legion) would be found amongst them! Yet a land which produced an Ignatius of Loyola, a Teresa of Jesus, a Dominic, a Vincent Ferrer, and others, whose lives, heroic deeds, or writings have, like so many bright constellations, illumined the whole world, also contains numberless others whose lives and writings are not less beautiful, nor less thought of in my own beloved land, but which in this country, alas! are not even known to exist. How few indeed in this great kingdom have even so much as heard of a Prado, whose writings are so profound, an Arrubal, a Cienfuegos; of a Posadas, whose works breathe the highest piety; of a Pradoventura, the famous eloquent preacher of Madrid, and to whom we owe the glory of having rendered the Spanish language so perfect as we find it in our own days; of a Tolet, of the wise theologian Valdivieso, of a

'Bibliothèque des Ecrivains de la C. de Jesus,' par De Backer, vol. ii., p. 255 (seconde série).

'Nouveau Dictionnaire Historique ou Histoire Abregée,' par une Société de Gens-de-Lettres (1783), vol. iv., p. 168.

'De las Medallas,' por D. Vincencio J. Lastanosa, Huesca, MDCXLV., p. 5.

PREFACE TO THE TRANSLATION.

Vasquez, who was styled the Augustin of Spain, an many more who lived in a land which with all its faults has ever been Catholic to its heart's core and who wrote in a language so grand, majestic and sublime, that it has been justly said of it that it was the language most fitting for mortal lips to use in addressing the Creator.

To what nobler work of love, then, can I dedicate my leisure hours than by translating various excellent Spanish Meditations, treatises, and other rich spiritual treasures, and thus bringing them before the notice of the natives of this land, who, thoroughly free from jealousy, place the works of other countries side by side with their own, and with equal grandeur of mind and nobility of soul unostentatiously open their hospitable shores to receive alike, in a tranquil asylum, the exile, the dethroned, the stranger, the widow, and the fatherless of all nations, leaving them unmolested and uninterfered with, so that they dwell there in perfect peace in every way, proving by their great charity how justly entitled this country is to the glorious renown which it has ever possessed throughout Christendom for its liberty, order, and generous philanthropy.

MARIANA MONTEIRO.

ST. SCHOLASTICA'S,
CLAPTON,
Feast of St. John of the Cross, 1899.

[The first issue of the translation, which was unfortunately destroyed by fire, had been carefully revised, in the MS. and in the proofs, by the late the Rev. Charles Brierley Garside, author of 'The Sacrifice of the Eucharist,' etc.]

THE WRITINGS OF FATHER BALTASAR GRACIAN,
KNOWN UNDER THE NAME OF 'WORKS OF
LORENZO GRACIAN':

'El Criticon, primera parte en la primavera de la niñez, y en el Estio de la Juventud.' Dedicated to Don Pablo de Parada.

'El Criticon, segunda parte. Juiziosa Cortesana Filosofia, en el Otoño de la Varonil edad.' Dedicated to S. S. Don Juan de Austria. Zaragoza, 1653.

'El Criticon, parte tercera. En el Invierno de la vejez.' Dedicated to Doctor Don Lorenzo Frances.

'El Discreto.' Published by Don Vincencio Juan de Lastanosa. Barcelona, 1647.

'El Politico D. Fernando el Catholico.' 1641. Published by Don V. J. de Lastanosa.

'El Heroe.' Infanzon. Huesca, 1637.

'El Forastero.' Brussels, 1633.

'Exercicios de Devocion.' 1662.

'Agudeza y Arte de Ingenio. En que se explican todos los modos y diferencias de conceptos.'

'Oraculo Manual y Arte de Prudencia.' Published by Don V. J. de Lastanosa. 1653.

'El Comulgatorio,' por el Padre Baltasar Gracian. Madrid, 1655.

TRANSLATION.

SUMMARY OF THE APPROBATIONS AND LICENSES.

THESE books of Lorenzo Gracian, entitled, 'Subtlety and Art of Genius'; 'The Discreet Man'; 'The Politician of the Catholic Don Ferdinand'; and the 'Meditations of Father Baltasar Gracian, before and after Holy Communion,' which have hitherto been known under the appellation of the 'Comulgador,' being all collected together in this the second volume, and approved by the Reverend Father M. Fr. Juan Perez de Baldelomar, formerly first Preacher of the Order of Saint Augustin, and at present Court Preacher in the Royal Convent of Saint Philip, have been printed by license from the Señor Don Garcia de Velasco, Vicar of this town of Madrid and its districts, before Pedro Palacios, on October 29, 1663, and the Ministers of the Council, as appears by the certification of the Secretary, Luis Vasquez de Varzas, on October 15, 1663, at the instance of Santiago Martin Redondo, bookseller.

Approbation of the Most Reverend Father Maestro Fr. Jayme Castellar, olim Prior of the Royal Convent of Barcelona, Vicar-General of all the Noble and enlightened Religion of Our Lady of Mercy for the Redemption of Captives, and now Officer of the Inquisition, etc.

By Commission of the Señor Doctor Don Juan Baptista Vila, Official Canon and Vicar-General of the Most Illustrious and Most Reverend Lord Don Fr. Alonso de Sotomayor, Archbishop, Bishop of Barcelona, I have seen part of the works of Lorenzo Gracian, namely : 'The Daily Oracle,' 'The Hero,' 'Subtlety and the Art of Genius,' 'The Discreet Man,' and the 'Politician of the Catholic Don Ferdinand.' Comprised in the same volume are various Meditations before and after Holy Communion, by Father Baltasar Gracian, of the Society of Jesus, and Reader of Scripture, with the four 'Selvas del año,' and have read them with great pleasure and profit, as being works which are both spiritually profitable, and refresh the powers of the soul. They are works worthy of many lights, for the nourishment and enlightenment of heroes, for raising up geniuses, and inspiring souls to the exercise of prudence and the rest of the moral virtues.

In Barcelona and Convent of Our Lady of Mercy for the Redemption of Captives, November 22, 1667.

FR. JAYME CASTELLAR.

Imprimatur,
Vila, Vic.-Gen., etc., Offic.

Approbation of the Most Reverend Father Teacher of Divinity Fr. Diego Carli, Doctor of Sacred Theology in the University of Barcelona, etc., of the Order of Preachers.

Part of the works of the ingenious, the political, and the discreet Lorenzo Gracian, viz., 'The Daily Oracle,' 'The Hero,' 'Subtlety and the Art of Genius,' 'The Discreet Man,' and the 'Politician of the Catholic Don Ferdinand,' with the various Meditations before and after the Sacred Communion, by the Father Baltasar Gracian, of the Society of Jesus, Reader of Scripture, with the 'Selvas del año,' I have read with particular attention, by order of V. S. the Illustrious Doctor Fr. Francisco De Pons, Most Worthy Abbot, and Most High Chancellor of the Principality of Catalonia, and not only do I not find obscurities which could stain the Royal lustre or dim the clear lights of virtue, but on the contrary they give, with genius and great subtlety, savoury food for the good employment of the three powers of the soul. 'Subtlety and the Art of Genius' yields instruction and shapes the understanding, and gives information to the most ingenious professor. 'The Discreet Man' is valuable for training the will in reference to the Pulpit and the Confessional. The 'Politician' nurtures the memory, teaching from experience, on grounds of certainty, the government of self, and encircling the brows of the pious and devout Christian with the Meditations which crown this volume. Thus, in one word, I say that they cannot come under my censure; hence, in the same

way as they have been with high eulogiums approved by the greatest lights of Spain, and having already acknowledged and approved the three parts of the 'Criticon,' I declare that it all seems to me, and is, *Valde bonum*; and I also say, that not only are these works adapted for great lights, but they are also useful for daily study in, and for all states of, life. This is my opinion.

The Convent of Saint Catherine Martyr, of Barcelona, of the Order of Preachers, January 15, 1668.

FR. DIEGO CARLI.

Die 22 Martii, 1668.
Imprimatur,
Don Francisco de Pons,
Cancellarius.

CENSURA.

Opera Laurentii Gratiani antehac impressa et sæpius approbata poterunt hęc imprimi. Datum Antuerpię, May 29, 1669.
 AUBERTUS VANDEN EDE,
 Can. et Archidiacon Antwerp,
 Lib. Censor.

*Opinion of the Very Reverend Father Teacher of
 Divinity Fray Pablo Guuu, of the Royal and
 Military Order of Our Lady of Mercy for the
 Redemption of Captives.*

By special commission and command of the Most Illustrious and Most Reverend Lord Don Miguel, Juan de Taverner y Rubi, most worthy Bishop of Gerona, of His Majesty's Council, and His Chancellor in the Principality of Catalonia, etc., I have seen the most ingenious works of Lorenzo Gracian

many times printed in various kingdoms, and although they do not require examination, as they are works from an author who is so well known, and so applauded by those who have been delighted in perusing them as by the illustrious masters who in those editions have so justly approved them, yet in compliance with a superior command, and also not to depart from an usage in practice, I say that I have found nothing worthy of correction; rather, what has been by all authorized demands, as what is due to justice, the reprint which is solicited. This is my opinion, given in this the Royal Convent of Saint Eulalia of Barcelona, July 8, 1700.

FRAY PABLO GUIU.

Die 12 July, 1700.

Imprimatur,

M. J. Epise, Gerunde Cancell.

Opinion of the Very Reverend Father Fray Francisco Duran, late Lecturer and actual DEFINIDOR of the Province of Catalonia, of Friars Minor, Observant and Synodical Examiner to the Bishopric of Barcelona.

By order and commission of the Very Illustrious Lord Doctor in both rights, Joseph Romaguera, Canon of the Holy Cathedral Church, and Vicar General *Official* for the Most Illustrious and Most Reverend Lord Don Fray Benito Sala, Most Worthy Bishop of Barcelona, I have many times read with great delight the very original and

subtle works of Lorenzo Gracian, commonly called the 'Criticon,' and without fear of injuring any other genius, I can foretell of him what a poet said of another :

' Quo major nullus, quo non præstantior alter :
Cui nec prisca parem sæcla tulére virum.'

In all ages of the world the great Providence of God has always favoured us with grand and subtle men, the study of whose works elevates us not only to imitation, but to admiration. There are men, so erudite, and so singular in the flight of their understandings, that with the mere expression of their pens, and the penetrating power of their wit, they can of their own opinions form such suitable expression that they leave all eloquence dumb. Some write in a persuasive manner, to please the taste, others with delicate phraseology offer intellectual entertainments for the learned. Some with gravity, solidity, ripeness, clearness, and subtlety, write alone what is profitable. Others there are who unite both in themselves. But there are others, again, who write with such art and spirit, with so much subtlety, that they not only impart to taste fruition, food, and profit, but they seem to transcend human limits and pass on to the Divine. Thus it seemed to St. Augustin, when he says in tom. 3, lib. 4 *De Doctrina Christiana* as follows : *Quædam est eloquentia qua magis ætatem juvenilem decet, quam senilem ; nec tam dicenda est eloquentia, si personæ non congruat eloquenti ita est quædam quæ viros summa auctoritate dignissimos, planè que divinos decet.*

The works of Lorenzo Gracian stand unique

for the expression of the wisdom of their author, worthy of the most elevated intelligence, yet which are valuable for all; in them are found wit and eloquence, pleasing to the taste and profitable for food, composed with such spirit and art that though they would seem fictions, they are not so, but most clear and manifest truths.

Several times have these works been printed, and acknowledged, and approved by many and great masters, and been eminently distinguished throughout the whole theatre of the universe, representing the greatness and learning of the author; for notwithstanding their having been examined by lynx-eyed and searching masters, yet now as they are being reprinted, I doubt not that they will solicit from everyone a worthy and merited acceptance. I must therefore tender many thanks to him who manifests such good taste by reprinting them with the object of preserving so precious a treasure.

I have not perceived in all these said works anything contrary to our Holy Catholic Faith, sacred canons or good customs; rather, on the contrary, they will, to my thinking, be of great utility and profit; therefore I not only approve and ratify this my opinion, but I pray that with all despatch the permission demanded may be granted.

Dated from this the Royal Convent of Saint Francis of Barcelona, July 9, 1700.

FRAY FRANCISCO DURAN.

Die 13 Julii, 1700.

Imprimatur,

Romaguera, Vic.-Gen., etc., Offic.

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SANCTUARY MEDITATIONS

FOR PRIESTS AND FREQUENT COMMUNICANTS.



FIRST MEDITATION.

On the plenitude of Grace, with which the Mother of God was prepared for receiving the Eternal Word.—*First Example of a Perfect Communion.*

FIRST POINT.—BEFORE COMMUNION.

CONSIDER the majestic preparations of sanctity and the crown of virtues with which the Mother of God was adorned to fit her to receive the Eternal Word into her most pure womb. She was conceived in grace and confirmed in grace, that sin might not, even for a single instant, obscure the living Sanctuary of the Lord. Her father was named 'Joachim,' signifying 'preparation of God,' and her mother 'Anna,' which means 'grace,' that all might join together in due preparation for it. She is born and lives in the 'City of Flowers,' blooming as the Flower of Purity. She is called 'Mary,' which signifies 'Lady,' and justly so, for even the Prince of Eternity

offers her obedience. She is brought up in the Temple, the great wonder of the world, to be herself the wonder of Heaven. She takes a vow of virginity, reserving herself as a sealed door for the Prince alone to enter in. She covers her soul with the plenitude of graces, and gems her heart with every virtue to receive a Lord Who is called Holy.

Reflect that you are about to receive into your breast that same Incarnate Word which Mary conceived in her womb, she with so much preparation, you so devoid of any! Remember that he who communicates receives the same Lord Whom Mary conceived. If the Mother of God was troubled at conceiving Him, surrounded as she was with such great sanctity, how can you, so utterly unworthy, not tremble at approaching to receive Him? The Virgin 'full of grace' fears, and you, defiled with sin, fear not! Endeavour to form a just conception of so great an action, preparing yourself assiduously for receiving frequently the Eternal Word, since the Virgin prepared herself so carefully in order to conceive Him once.

SECOND POINT.—AT THE TIME OF COMMUNION.

To this disposition of her whole life the event which followed corresponded well. Concealed and separated from all human bustle was this Lady—given up completely to Divine communications. So retired from earth, so familiar with Heaven, it needed that an Angel should enter to search for

her in her hidden retreat, and that he should knock at the solitude of her heart, so retired in herself was she, so absorbed in her devotion.

Her virginal modesty veiled her beauty, her circumspect humility was the rampart of her chastity. Full of astonishment, the Angel salutes her. Mary, troubled, listens—she who could teach the very angelic spirits purity.

The sacred Paranympth invites her to the Divine maternity, and she attends to the defence of her virginity; she bends with her whole being as she accepts the offer of the greatest of honours, and she consents, not to be a Queen, but a handmaid. In every word she utters a wonder is contained, and in each action that she performs a prodigy.

O soul, approach and learn virtues, study perfections, copy this original and learn to receive your God; reflect with what humility you should come near, with what reverence kneel in His presence! If the Virgin, so crowned with perfections, was troubled, if, so full of grace, feared, needing that he who is the 'strength of God' should comfort her, how can you, so devoid of virtues, so covered with the filth of your sins, dare to receive into your breast that same immense God? Reflect, what can be an adequate preparation, what purity equal to such an occasion? Prepare your heart, then, if not with the perfection which is due to such an act, at least with all the graces you can possibly attain.

THIRD POINT.—AFTER COMMUNION.

In this purest Tabernacle of Grace, on this sublime Throne of all virtues, the Eternal Word takes flesh ; here is compressed that great God Whom the heavens cannot contain, and she who was full of grace remains full of devotion. So soon as she is made sensible that in her purest womb is enclosed her Son—God—her soul, with all its faculties, lies prostrate in adoration, dedicating all its powers to His worship and love. Her understanding, enraptured, contemplates that immense grandeur reduced to the compass of an infant body. Her will is inflamed with love for that infinite goodness which had been communicated to her, and her memory ever recalls His mercies. Her imagination represented Him in His humanity ; her exterior senses, separating themselves from the love of every external duty, remained, as it were, absorbed in the already felt presence of her God. Her eyes longed to gaze on Him, her ears yearned to listen to His voice, her arms folded Him in spirit in her embrace, sealing with her lips His tender humanity.

In imitation of her, may these be your employments, O my soul ! When, after having communicated, you possess in your breast really and truly the same God and Lord, embrace Him tenderly ; summon all your strength to serve Him and all your powers to adore Him. Obtain by fervent contemplation the power to enjoy those sweetest colloquies, those tenderest expressions, with which the Virgin addressed the God she bore within her.

FOURTH POINT.—IN THANKSGIVING.

The Virgin hymned her thanks to God, on the banks of this abyss of mercies, more gloriously than did that other Mary, the sister of Moses, on the banks of the Red Sea. She commenced at once to magnify His wondrous deeds; for that which was abridged in her womb enlarged her mind. She invited all generations to assist in thanksgiving for the mercies wrought in her, and to magnify the Holy Name of the Lord, proceeding to eternize the Divine favours with grateful praises. And then, looking back, so that those who had gone before, those who were living then, and those who were yet to come, should all magnify the Lord, she awakens Abraham and all his posterity to confess and praise the great Word of God, accomplished and already incarnate. In this way did the Virgin Mother return thanks for having conceived the Infinite God.

At the resounding of such grateful canticles do not you, my soul, remain dumb, for you have received this same Lord; praise Him, then, with the voice of exultation and exaltation, which are the sounds of the invited ones, employ that mouth and tongue, which have tasted such Divine nourishment, in His sweet praises. Sing to-day a new canticle to the Lord for His new favours, and in His real Divine Presence dedicate all your interior to perseverance in praising him for ever and ever. Amen.

SECOND MEDITATION.

The Banquet of the Prodigal Son applied to the Holy Communion.

FIRST POINT.—BEFORE COMMUNION.

CONSIDER the thoughtless Prodigal fallen from the greatest felicity to the lowest state of misery, that he may appreciate more justly the delights of his father's house, now exchanged for the service of a tyrant; living in a vile hut, consumed with hunger, crouching in his nakedness, depressed with sadness, envying the filthy swine those husks of theirs, which are denied to himself. Then, remembering his father's well-covered table, and longing for that delicious bread which even the very hired servants had in plentifulness, and feeling himself perishing with hunger, he wept abundantly. This was the first step towards his remedy, for it caused his hopes to spring up, and confiding in that paternal love which is never altogether eradicated from a father's heart, he resolved to arise, return home, and enter the gates of his paradise.

Contemplate, now, another prodigal even more wretched, even yourself, for in leaving the house of your God and your Father's table you purchased

your unhappiness in order to serve your appetites—hard and cruel tyrants! Consider how little your pleasures have satisfied you, how little delight your vanities have offered you, however much they may have elated you. Lament your wretchedness in having exchanged the favour of a son of God for the despicable slavery of Satan. Cast aside all your illusions; despise all that is of this world; value everything that appertains to Heaven, and with a brave resolution return to-day to the house of your God, and to your good Father's table.

SECOND POINT.—AT THE TIME OF COMMUNION.

The Prodigal resolves to return to the paternal home, and for this end disposes himself with sorrow to obtain consolations. But he first of all returns into himself—for even to himself he was a stranger. He approaches, acknowledging his vileness before so great a magnificence. Yet he is filled with a sure confidence, for though he has been a bad son, he has a good father, and, covered with a sorrowing shame, he confesses his weakness and his ignorance. He commences with the tender word 'Father,' and continues, 'I have sinned against Heaven and before thee.' How quickly the father of mercies hears his voice, and runs to receive and clasp him in his arms whom he had already received back to the love of his heart. He does not loathe him on account of his garments, torn and filthy though they be, nor does he turn away from him on account of his errors, but he hides him in his embrace, that not even the

servants should witness his misfortunes ; and though the necessity for food be most urgent, he attends first to propriety, and orders a new robe to be brought in token of the new life his son now enters on. He puts a ring on his finger, in restitution of his profaned nobility, and when he sees him fit to appear as his son, he seats him at his table richly robed, and feasts him sumptuously.

Consider what resolutions you should form to arise from the abyss of misery in which your sins have engulfed you, what dispositions of true humility you should possess before ascending into the house of your great Father ; how adorned you should be if you are to sit down at the angelic table ; not carrying in with you the errors of your sins, but freed from them by a good confession, clothed with the precious robe of grace, with the ring of noble charity on your finger, and covered with the richest jewels of every grace. Thus prepared, approach to obtain the Divine favours.

THIRD POINT.—AFTER COMMUNION.

The loving father seeing him fair and clean, deigns to seat him at his table, and in order to satisfy his great hunger he orders that the best calf of his herds should be killed, and after being roasted whole at the fire of his love, to be placed before him.

The prodigal commenced to satisfy his appetite ; the food being delicious. With what delight must he have enjoyed it ! His good father, gazing upon him, must have urged him to eat and be filled, knowing

that he eats well who relishes his food. Now he experiences the difference, tasting one delight after another. How must he, who in his misery had begged for the vilest food that was given to swine, have appreciated the food now before him.

Reflect how much greater is your bliss, your table being so much more splendid, for in place of the fatted calf you feed sacramentally on the Son of the Eternal Father. Animate your faith, awaken your hunger, eat with joy and It will nourish you, relish It well, and you will find in It new sweetnesses; dwell in contemplation upon what you partake of, and you will obtain life eternal.

FOURTH POINT.—IN THANKSGIVING.

How grateful the prodigal must have been to that father who so entertained him, appreciating to the full his great happiness, from the moment when he was undeceived. What efficacious and firm purposes he must have truly made of never more leaving his home or his father's table; and in the midst of his delight what horror must he have felt at the miserable state in which he had been; how watchful he must have been not to displease his father in the slightest particular, through filial love, and the recollection of his misfortunes! How gratefully he must have recounted his happiness to everyone belonging to his home, from the most favoured to the lowest hireling, dwelling on his father's kindnesses and favours, and praising his gifts! How much greater thanks should you render after having

communicated, when you have been so highly favoured. Let your fervour correspond to the delight of this heavenly food ; lift up your eyes from this banquet to Heaven, and having tasted the sweetness of your God, let your tongue break forth into Divine praises.

THIRD MEDITATION.

On communicating with the dispositions of the Centurion.

FIRST POINT.—BEFORE COMMUNION.

MEDITATE to-day on the excellent virtues with which the centurion armed himself when he sought to win the aid of infinite mercy. A fervent charity filled him when he sallied forth seeking the gift of health, not for an only son, but for a lowly servant ; humbling himself first to a creature, what will he not obtain from his Creator ? He well knew how little human remedies avail without Divine ones, and thus undeceived he solicited them with esteem and respect. He trusted not to the diligence of a careless servant, nor did he send another to speak to his God.

Reflect that to-day you are leaving your house in search of the same Lord, not to solicit from Him the cure of a servant, but the health of your own soul ; it is to Jesus Himself you are going to speak ; endeavour, then, to cover yourself with virtues thus to obtain His mercies. Approach with humility ; prostrate yourself before His Divine Presence, drawing from it great fervour of spirit, an ardent charity and a careful diligence.

SECOND POINT.—AT THE TIME OF COMMUNION.

Full of charity, the centurion approaches to the Lord in perfect confidence that He has the power and the will to effect a cure, and by Him is received most benignly. 'Lord,' he says, 'my servant at home lieth sick of the palsy,' and so helpless that he cannot come to Thee, but in spirit. And the Lord answered, 'If he cannot come, I will go and heal him.' Not only does He listen to the centurion, but He deigns to enter his house to cure a servant, rewarding his great charity by a charity greater still, and not suffering Himself to be outdone in loving mercy.

Understand well that on your expressing the least wish or yearning for the Lord, He invites Himself at once to enter the door of your breast. Open wide, then, the interior portals of your soul to receive the favours which He has ready on His right hand; dilate your mouth, that He may fill it with such delicious food, and let your gratitude correspond to the extent of His infinite goodness. Enkindle in yourself the desire that the Lord may come to you, enter your breast, and heal your soul.

THIRD POINT.—AFTER COMMUNION.

The centurion, full of deep admiration at the Lord's Divine benevolence, comparing his own nothingness with His infinite greatness, astonished and even confounded, exclaims, 'Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my lowly roof.' Reflect that while the proud Pharisees heap contempt on

the Lord, a soldier proudly proclaims his deep veneration. The Pharisees thought it beneath them to come even near Him; the centurion is lost in admiration and amazed that the Lord should deign to enter his house.

If the centurion is confounded that the Lord should wish to cross the threshold of his house, what should your astonishment be that He should condescend to enter, not merely under your roof, but into your very bosom? 'One word alone would suffice,' he says, 'to heal my servant, and fill my house with joy.' He is satisfied with a single spoken word, and the Infinite Word, made flesh, enters into your very soul. Compare the greatness of this Lord and Master with your own vileness, and when in Holy Communion you receive Him, annihilate yourself, owning that you are nothing, reflecting that if for the exercise of His omnipotence one word be sufficient, much more is needed to satisfy the greatness of His mercy.

FOURTH POINT.—IN THANKSGIVING.

With what grateful accents of thanksgiving must the centurion have burst forth for so many mercies shown to him! how thankful must he have felt, after being so favoured! In humility he had worshipped Him, and gratefully now he blesses Him, loudly proclaiming His greatness. The Saviour also praised him for his faith—a faith which Holy Church sets before us for an example when we are receiving our Lord in Holy Communion.

Consider, my soul, how much greater thanksgiving should you render this Lord for so many and greater favours which He has bestowed upon you ; do not turn your back ungratefully upon this Fountain of Mercy, but with eternal gratitude extol Him, saying, 'I will sing for ever the mercies of the Lord.' Correspond to the participation of this daily bread by a daily thanksgiving for the graces received each day, practising with this exercise a greater acquisition of virtues.

FOURTH MEDITATION.

On receiving Holy Communion with the faith of the woman of Canaan.

FIRST POINT.—BEFORE COMMUNION.

CONSIDER how the woman of Canaan leaves her home, her country and her comforts, and goes as diligently as her sorrow was great to ask for mercy at the Fountain of all compassion; and though she met with multiplied trials, they only served to increase her diligence. The wondrous deeds of Christ had come to her knowledge, and she had not turned to them a deaf ear, but speedily came, calling upon Him. Great dispositions these for appearing before a Lord Who loves to comfort and to heal!

Reflect how this woman of Canaan comes begging for that mercy which you are besought to accept, since it is easier for you to find the whole of Heaven's bread than for her to obtain a crumb. You have not to leave your country or your home, and to journey to the ends of the earth to receive the Holy Communion, but in every Catholic church our Lord is ever inviting you to receive Him. Appreciate,

then, your happiness, so much greater and nearer, and endeavour to come out of your own self, quitting your self-love, your perverse purposes, and your evil intentions, that without hindrance or impediment this Divine goodness may enter in, deriving therefrom the great dispositions of an heroic faith, a firm hope, perseverance in prayer, and a fervent diligence.

SECOND POINT.—AT THE TIME OF COMMUNION.

The woman of Canaan persists in her supplications, and the Lord seems not to heed her when most He is attending to her cries. He keeps back His mercy that she may be more impressed with the knowledge of her own miseries, so that, repeating her cries, she even troubles the Apostles with them, although to Him they were the sweetest music.

Reflect how important it is not to faint or fail in the exercise of virtue. Do not because of your shortcomings desist from the Sacraments, but rather persevere the more. Our Lord's delight is to hear our prayers, and His rest to repose in the bosom of the communicant. Learn from this fervent woman perseverance and courage, not being intimidated by trifles, and you will thus crown your works.

THIRD POINT.—AFTER COMMUNION.

The Lord continued to prove her virtue in the crucible of trials, and purify the gold of her faith, so that it might shine resplendently. In order, moreover, that her patience might prove the conqueror, and her humility be exalted, when most He desired

to have her come near to Him, He sternly bade her retire, saying, 'It is not good to take the bread of the children and cast it to the dogs.' Who would not lose heart at seeing such stern signs of disfavour? But the woman of Canaan was not dismayed, and only humbled herself the more. She who had so bitterly experienced the rigour and tyrannies of the devil feared not the seeming harshness of her God. She felt not her slights, who knew so well her own demerits. She retorted—and not to a man only, but to God, His own argument—saying, 'Yea, Lord, for even the whelps eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters.' I am conscious, as said the holy King, that I am but as a beast in Thy sight, and more useless than a whelp, but I also know that Thou art my good Master Who, if He feeds the birds of the air, will not have me perish.

Contemplate this woman's excellent humility, the firmness of her faith, the fidelity of her confidence, and the perfection of her charity, and reflect that while she would have been contented with a crumb, and even have judged herself highly favoured to receive it, you receive not only a crumb of Heaven's bread, but the whole of it. How much greater, then, should be your appreciation of your gift, and your enjoyment of your happy lot! Learn here humility, and practise it by humiliations. Estimate highly the favour, and adore the greatness of the God Whom you receive.

FOURTH POINT.—IN THANKSGIVING.

On hearing such expressions of perfect faith, the Saviour exclaimed, 'O woman, great is thy faith; be

it done to thee as thou wilt,' and He granted her what she demanded and what her faith had merited for her. Our Lord uttered this exclamation of astonishment for us also to admire and to imitate her faith.

Consider how gratefully she must have thanked Him Whom with such deep humility she had approached, Whom she had supplicated with such faith, and from Whom she had obtained her request. Returning home, she lifted up her voice in accents of gratitude, she who had before joined her cries to her petitions. Oh ye who have obtained so much greater mercy, not indeed the crumbs but the fulness of grace, let your gratitude and thankfulness be so much the more abundant, and let the Divine canticles of praise ever resound in your mouth for all eternity!

FIFTH MEDITATION.

On the Manna, as a figure of this Sacrament, in which is considered the assiduity of the people in gathering it, the delights which it contained, and the circumstances of preserving it.

FIRST POINT.—BEFORE COMMUNION.

MEDITATE on the marvellous circumstances which preceded the reception of this miraculous food by the people of Israel. God's chosen people left Egypt and its darkness in search of a vision of peace; they crossed a sea, leaving their mortal enemies drowned within its depths; they travelled through a desert without holding communication with anyone, only communing with God. They drank from the bitter waters of Mara, joining prayer with mortification; earthly food failed them that so they might the more relish Heaven's bread; all these great preparations being necessary to teach us that those who partake of the bread of Angels must lead an angelic life.

Consider that if for the reception of a food which was only a figure of this Sacrament, such preparations were necessary, what dispositions can suffice for receiving as we should this supersubstantial bread—the Body and Blood of the Lord, not in figure but

in reality? You must break from the slavery of sin, drive far from you the darkness of ignorance, join prayer with mortification if you would reverently commune with God. Retirement from the world and from men is needed if we would obtain the relish of this true Manna!

SECOND POINT.—AT THE TIME OF COMMUNION.

Since the Israelites were so well disposed, they merited from the Lord to be consoled by having this exquisite food sent them—a food which both astonished and satisfied them. He did not give them earthly, but heavenly food, containing in itself every delight, suiting every taste, so that they might lead a heavenly life, teaching them that every good gift which they could desire was contained therein, and thus in astonishment they cried out, ‘What precious food is this, coming down from Heaven and from the hand of God?’ With far greater reason, my soul, can you ask to-day, What delicious food is this? and faith will answer you: This is the Word made flesh; this is the bread of Angels given to man to eat; this is that bread which is the delight of kings; this is the true manna which gives life—in a word, man receives his God, Who, being infinite goodness, contains in Himself every delight. Oh, taste and see how sweet He is—tasting of every virtue and grace!

THIRD POINT.—AFTER COMMUNION.

Mysterious circumstances accompanied the reception of this mysterious food. At the dawn of day,

in that virgin hour before the sunrise, the Israelites sallied forth to gather it—teaching us that if we desire to receive this heavenly manna we must make it our first duty of the day to rise early and diligently gather it at any cost, ere the sun rises and the heat of the world melts it; for this food, being so pure and delicate, cannot endure the hot breath of worldly desires. Each one gathered what sufficed only for the day, not laying by for the morrow, as worldly avarice might suggest, thus teaching us that we must approach frequently to receive this our daily bread; the manna which was reserved for another day bred corruption, a figure and image of a delinquent conscience.

Reflect that far more precise and mysterious circumstances should attend the receiving of the sacramental manna. Let no duty whatever deter you from this your first care and thought. Seek It diligently, else you will be left empty; receive It with great purity of conscience, lest in place of giving you life, It engender the seeds of death, like the reserved manna which bred corruption.

FOURTH POINT.—IN THANKSGIVING.

After being so highly favoured by God, the people ungratefully murmured against their Lord, and longed after the leeks of Egypt; for being so busied in material things, they failed to perceive the spiritual graces contained in that bread of Heaven which they despised—an instance of man's deep ingratitude for the great mercies which God bestows upon him.

My soul, tremble, for you have been more ungrate-

ful than they were ; and as you have received greater favours, your ingratitude is far more culpable. For ever praise this heavenly manna and frequently receive It, laud It with more canticles than did the royal Prophet, who extolled what was only a figure of this Sacrament. Prove your estimation of this gift by losing all relish for the vile satisfactions of this world.

SIXTH MEDITATION.

On communicating with the devotion of Zacheus.

FIRST POINT.—BEFORE COMMUNION.

O MY God and my Lord, whilst the proud Pharisees would not deign even to look on Thee, a chief of the publicans is anxious to see Thee ! He does not demand a cure for his ills, as others had done—not that they were lesser, being maladies of the soul, but because, not being yet enlightened, he was not conscious of them. It was his curiosity which prompted his wish to gaze on a Worker of Miracles, not the desire of reverently following Thee. He pushes amongst that crowd, but cannot approach to Thee—for the rich can with difficulty come to Thee, poor as Thou art, and in labours from Thy birth—nor did anyone mind him, although he had kept open house for them. Finding it impossible to reach Thee, he climbed a tree, like the lowest in the crowd, not caring what the world might think, but braving all to gaze on God.

Reflect to-day when you are going out to receive the Holy Communion that you are seeking for the same Lord, that you may know and contemplate Him. The accidents of bread which surround Him

prevent your beholding Him, and still more do the imperfections that degrade you, since you are meaner in spirit than *Zacheus* was in stature. Rise then above yourself, ascend the tree of devout contemplation, climb by mortification the wood of the Cross, which is planted in the midst of a lively faith, verdant with hope, covered with the fruits of charity, and with the eyes of your soul attain to behold Him, solicitous of ever contemplating Him.

SECOND POINT.—AT THE TIME OF COMMUNION.

Zacheus gazed on Thee, O Lord, from the tree, with as deep a pleasure as his desire had been to behold Thee. His longing eyes were fixed on Thee, and Thou didst dilate his heart, that he might more lovingly enjoy Thy Divine Presence, and experience in his soul its marvellous effects. And when, bringing Thyself to his level, Thou didst look upon him who was thus beholding Thee, Thou didst raise Thy Divine eyes, which, whether beheld by man, or beholding, were ever full of benignity. Thy loving words and wishes followed that look, and calling him by name, that he might know that Thou wert moved towards him to grant him a great favour, '*Zacheus*,' Thou saidst, 'come down quickly, for to-day I must abide in thy house.' Oh what joyous admiration must have been his at such an unexpected bliss! Oh the value of man's fervour in seeking for God! For he who deemed it a great joy to gaze on Thee from afar, comes down from the tree, approaches near to Thee, walks side by side with Thee, and sits down at the table with Thee!

Imagine yourself, my soul, on the tree of contemplation, the support of your littleness, desirous of seeing and knowing the Lord, and that, calling you by name, He speaks to you, saying, 'Come down, and approach to receive Me sacramentally, for to-day it behoves Me to abide in your bosom.' This day, He says, not to-morrow, lest it be too late; and if the Lord says that it is of great moment for Him to show mercy, how much more important it is for you to receive mercy! Go, then, my soul, and receive Him with fervour, that He may not speak to a man deaf from ignorance, and wilfully ungrateful from slothfulness.

THIRD POINT.—AFTER COMMUNION.

With what haste must Zacheus have obeyed! He prostrated himself before the Lord, adoring those Feet that had deigned to cross the threshold of his house. Well might he have wished that it had been a grand palace, to receive so magnificent a Guest. He offered whatsoever he possessed, laying it all at the Feet of Him Who divided His riches with the poor. 'One half of my goods, Lord,' he said, 'I give in alms,' and without doubt from that goodwill alone he merited to receive the favour he now enjoyed, because he that receives the poor receives the Lord, and he that feeds the beggar attains to feed upon his God. But when Zacheus found himself sitting at table with his Lord, so close to Him Whom he had barely succeeded in beholding even from afar, what joy he must have felt in his soul, how beside himself must he have been, to think

that in his house was the Infinite Goodness Himself!

Consider, when you find yourself seated at the table of the Altar, how much nearer you are to Christ than Zacheus was. Not only do you sit by His side, but you place Him in your very bosom, hidden within your breasts—what joy should be yours at receiving so great a favour; let there be no other joy for you, and let your gratitude be such as to awaken in you a continual desire of possessing Him, and of retrieving the negligence of the past, and the sorrow of having lost so many Communion, by frequently receiving Him in future.

FOURTH POINT.—IN THANKSGIVING.

Zacheus was as thankful as he had been joyful, for the humble are ever grateful, since they feel that every favour done to them is more than they deserve; how much more did he esteem a favour that was so little merited, recounting it with delight to his friends, and gaining them all over to God. What thanks must he have rendered to his God, offering Him all that he possessed, and first of all his heart, saying, 'Lord, from this day when I have known Thee, I begin to serve Thee, for this has been a change of the Most High, because Thou hast lifted me up to bless me, filling my house with good things, and my soul with graces.'

Consider how much more grateful should you show yourself, for if He deigned to enter the house of that publican, here He comes into your very breast. There Zacheus invited the Lord, but the Lord

provides a banquet for you ; there Zacheus offered Him his whole house, here you must offer Him your whole soul—your understanding to know Him, your will to love Him, begging Him to bestow His blessing upon you, no longer as being the son of Abraham, but of that great Father Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

SEVENTH MEDITATION.

On receiving Holy Communion with the confidence of the woman who touched the hem of the garment of Christ.

FIRST POINT.—BEFORE COMMUNION,

CONSIDER how this woman had suffered much for many years from so great a trial of life, the penalty of sin, and finding what little benefit she had derived from earthly physicians, she to-day applied to the Physician from Heaven, providing herself, as an introduction, with a rich faith and confidence in the power and will of this Lord, knowing that with this Divine Physician to give is to ask; and thus she approached Him, saying, 'If I should but touch no more than a thread of His garment, I know that I should secure the thread of my life, slender though it may be.' Oh great woman! Oh great mercy of the Lord! Other doctors touch their patients in order to cure them; here it is the infirm woman herself that touches her Physician in order to be healed. 'I well know,' she said, 'His infinite virtue, and the greatness of His power, which equals His goodness, and He is as merciful as He is powerful let me but touch Him and I shall be cured.'

Be sensible of the great sickness of imperfections

which afflicts your soul—that flood of passions and reflux of sins; conceive a great desire of being healed, which is the first disposition required for recovering your health. Understand well that here you have that same Divine Physician Who cured so many sick; run to Him, then, with a lively faith—an heroic confidence; for your sole remedy is to touch and receive Him.

SECOND POINT.—AT THE TIME OF COMMUNION.

On every side the multitudes pressed around the Saviour, and so surrounded Him with loving hearts and affections that they prevented this woman from approaching to ask of Him face to face the favour of health, for great obstacles are always placed before those who endeavour to reach to God. Seeing this, she must have said, 'I do not merit so great a privilege as that of speaking to my God and my Lord, being only dust and ashes; but I know that so great is His power that if I but touch the hem of His garment I shall be healed.' She believed, and the Lord effected a cure; she touched His garment, and in that instant she was healed. Many others pressed around the Lord and were not healed like this one who came to Him with a lively faith and lasting confidence, and who not only touched Him with her hand, but with her fervent spirit touched the tenderest chord of His Heart, which was the greatness of His mercies.

Reflect now, you that approach to receive Him in Holy Communion, how much greater is your felicity, for you not only touch the border of His

garment, but the whole of the Lord Himself you embrace and press round, you hide within your breast, and receive Him all entire. Animate, then, your faith, enkindle your charity, realize your happiness, and appreciate this occasion. And now that you touch the hem of the sacramental species, arouse in yourself a great confidence that you will be completely restored to health from all your vices and passions.

THIRD POINT.—AFTER COMMUNION.

‘Who is it that touched Me?’ said Christ at that very moment, and Saint Peter answered: ‘Master, the multitudes throng and press Thee, and dost Thou say, Who touched Me?’ Yes, for though many crowd around Jesus, they do not really touch Him; they do not adore with ardour. This one, indeed, touched Him in a point where He was most sensitive, His infinite goodness; she with fervour, they coldly, and thus the Lord neither feels them nor do they feel Him.

Listen! for to-day that same Christ asks you, ‘Soul, hast thou touched Me with a lively faith?’ ‘Hast thou communicated with fervour, or only through custom?’ ‘Who is it that has touched Me truly?’ Oh, how many souls that receive Him in Communion do not touch the Lord—no, not even the smallest thread of His garment! How many communicate without a due preparation, and therefore without deriving any fruit. Their wounds remain unhealed, because they do not touch Him with their hearts, and they are not cured because

they do nothing towards being cured! Draw from this meditation a great desire of approaching to this merciful Lord, in such a manner that He may feel your fervour, and that you may experience His favours.

FOURTH POINT.—IN THANKSGIVING.

Astonished at what she experienced in herself, and at witnessing one wonder after another, this woman, full of love and of fear, finding herself discovered and cured, at once proclaims her unworthiness and her joy, and returns thanks for His mercies. The Lord called her 'daughter,' confirming His blessing, and bidding her again have confidence who had derived so much from it.

Reflect, what thanks should you render to a Lord Who does not bestow upon you a mere thread of His garment, but His whole body and soul; permitting you not only to touch Him, but actually giving Himself to you as food. Let, then, the thread of His Divine praises be commenced, and continue unbroken for all eternity. And when you attain to touch this sacramental Lord, provide in such a manner a love so reverential that you may remain both healed and grateful.

EIGHTH MEDITATION.

On the entrance of the Ark of the Testament into the house of Obededom, and the many blessings which accompanied it.

FIRST POINT.—BEFORE COMMUNION.

CONSIDER what terror Oza's temerity must have caused in the minds of the beholders on witnessing the dreadful judgment that befell his rashness. Terrified at seeing their priest dead, they cried out, 'If this one is punished for merely touching the ark when apparently in danger, what penalties must be due for unworthily receiving it?' He stretched forth his hand, and all the others drew theirs back, tremblingly hiding them in their breasts, and even the holy King considered his holy palace unworthy to receive so great a guest, judging it inadequate for offering such Divine homage as was due to it.

Reflect, that if with respect to the ark, which was only a shadow of this Divine Sacrament, the Lord was so jealous, demanding for it so great a respect, and that it should be treated with so much majesty, what reverence, what circumspection, what purity can suffice for receiving the immense and infinite God contained in this Host? If the Angels assist

around Him with awe, how can you approach without fear? If the purity of the solar rays is unfit to serve as its crystal monstrance, how unsuited must be the centre of your heart and the foulness of your conscience! Conceive a reverential fear and awe ere you enclose within the narrow precincts of your breast the whole incomprehensible majesty of Heaven.

SECOND POINT.—AT THE TIME OF COMMUNION.

The king orders that the ark should be taken to the house, not of a prince, but of a man full of virtue, which is the true nobility, who was great in the eyes of the Lord, because he was humble in his own. Heaven confirmed the choice by multiplied favours; many were his virtues, but greater was his humility; great were his merits, and equally great was his diffidence. He was called Obededom, which signifies 'servant of the Lord,' it being a great attraction to the Divine greatness that he who is to receive Him should lower himself as a slave. Humility is the tablet which points out the dwelling-house of God. Obededom held himself to be the least worthy of all persons to receive into his house the ark, yet from obedience consented, and thus could proclaim the victories attained, though not the mercies received. How diligently he must have arranged it, adorning it more with virtues than with precious things; there would be no lack of the tender fear of God, nor of an humble, modest love.

Reflect that to-day you receive not into your

house, but into yourself, not the shadow, but the Sun itself, though hidden in the clouds of the elements, no longer the figure, but the reality of a God, actually and truly hidden in this Host. How great, then, should be your care to adorn the temple of your soul with the riches of virtue and the jewels of merit! Remember that to-day the King of Heaven ordains that the ark of His sacramental Body should enter under your roof, and into your bosom. With what dispositions of humility should you receive Him, and with what reverential love pay Him homage!

THIRD POINT.—AFTER COMMUNION.

The ark was brought into the house of Obededom, who was first favoured by receiving it and afterwards enriched with many benedictions. His house was not an empty one, but full of devotion, nor was the ark itself void, for it was filled with the treasures of heaven, which crowned it with every happiness. How joyful must Obededom have felt when, expecting severity, he only experienced favours! so greatly are rewarded obedient services which are offered with humility. The Lord repaid him well for his hospitality, like the great King He was, Who from the place He once enters banishes for ever sorrow and misery.

Reflect what mercies may you not promise yourself the day when into your breast enters the true ark, not void and empty, but filled with the Divine manna of the Body and Blood of Christ, true God and Lord! The ark was the casket, this is the jewel;

the one filled the house of Obededom with benefits because it was a figure of this Real Presence of God which, with greater favours, and much more abundantly, will fill your heart to overflowing. Avail yourself of this occasion to ask Him for every gift, remembering that here are contained all the treasures of God, for this is the rich mine of His grace. Ask, then, because you really and truly entertain within you the very King Himself.

FOURTH POINT.—IN THANKSGIVING.

Not the least of the favours received was the gratitude which filled Obededom and all his household for blessings so great that the fame of them was the talk of all Israel. Nothing else was spoken of, all proclaiming the blessings of his house, emulating his joy, and, if possible, his virtue. Even the holy King David was encouraged to carry the Ark into his Royal Palace, desiring to be employed in its reception and to participate in its benefits.

Oh you who to-day have communicated, take heed that you do not become silent in His Divine praises, for gratitude is part of His mercies; and seeing yourself more highly favoured than was Obededom, prove yourself to be so much more thankful, as these graces are a pledge to you of receiving greater favours; and as all in your abode have participated in the Divine mercy, let your whole being and all your strength be employed in praising the Lord, inviting with David all generations to join you in singing His praises for all eternity. Amen.

NINTH MEDITATION.

On approaching to receive the Holy Communion with the humility of Saint Peter.

FIRST POINT.—BEFORE COMMUNION.

CONSIDER that if John merited to receive from his Divine Master so many favours on account of his virginal purity, Peter also deserved to obtain favour by his humility. John was the beloved disciple; Peter, the humble one, was to be the head of the Church, superior to them all by his dignity, though he abased himself to the feet of all by his humility. Whatever occasions served to inflame his fervour, his humility caused him to repress his desires; he dared not ask his Lord any questions, and so the Lord interrogates him, and whilst others aspired after the first places, Peter judged himself unworthy even to stand before his Master. The Lord, pleased with his lowliness, leaving aside the other ships enters into that of Peter; from it He preaches and in it reposes, Peter receiving reproofs, but also enjoying special favours.

Reflect what a good disposition humility is for receiving a Lord Who is so pleased with the lowly, and when approaching to the Holy Communion

endeavour to array yourself with this holy meekness; retire into yourself, be convinced of your littleness, that the Lord may advance towards you, and that you may enjoy His greatness. Sit down in the lowest place at this Divine banquet, and the Lord will Himself seat you in the highest. The more you desire to please a Lord Who so loves the meek and the little ones, the more should you humble yourself.

SECOND POINT.—AT THE TIME OF COMMUNION.

The Apostles had laboured all the night, and had taken nothing, because they were not assisted by their Divine Master; they were in darkness, being without His Presence, and toiled in vain, being without His assistance; for where He is not, nothing works with fruit, or happily. The night of His absence at length was over, and the Divine sun arose, filling every object with its bright influence. Saint Peter opened the eyes of his faith, and at once knew himself and his Divine Master; he acknowledged his own weakness, and the power of the Lord, his own lowness, and his Master's greatness. In himself he saw nothing, in God everything, and thus he said, 'Divine Master, we have laboured all the night and have taken nothing; for without Thee we are nothing and are worthless; but now in Thy Name I will let down the nets.' And acting with this confidence, he obtained his draught with a double success, for both the ships were filled with the multitude of fishes.

O my soul, you who spend all the night of this

darksome life labouring against the current in the inconstant waters of this world, where there is to be found neither security nor peace, hearken to what the Lord is telling you from that Tabernacle : ' Lift up your desires towards true happiness, and your bosom will be filled with eternal goods ; cast your net towards Me, and you will be nourished with My own Body. Look on It with the faith of Peter, go comparing your poverty with My riches, your timidity with My infinitude, your weakness with My omnipotence, your nothingness with My infinite goodness, and say to Me, " Lord, without Thee I am nothing, I am worth nothing, and can do nothing " ! '

THIRD POINT.—AFTER COMMUNION.

Saint Peter, wholly astonished, annihilated himself, feeling himself to be so great a sinner in presence of that immense goodness, weakness itself before infinite power. Full of humility and self-abasement on seeing himself before his Lord, he reverently exclaimed : ' Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man ; retire from me, for I cannot go from Thee, ' which was equal to saying, Who am I, and Who art Thou ? Lord, I am a vile creature, Thou the Omnipotent Creator ; I am ignorance itself, Thou art Infinite Wisdom ; I am frail and tomorrow cease to be, Thou art without defect and eternal ; I am a vile worm of the earth, Thou art the Sovereign Monarch of the heavens ; I am weak, Thou art all-powerful ; I am mean, Thou art

immense ; I am a poor beggar, Thou the richness of the Father ; I am full of necessities, Thou art independent ; in a word, I am mere nothingness, Thou possessest all things. My Lord and my God, how canst Thou endure me in Thy Presence !

O my soul, with how much greater reason couldst thou exclaim with Saint Peter, and say the same as he did ; for if he, being only before his Lord, is thus humbled and confounded, what is thy condition, who not only standest in His Presence, but actually touchest Him with impure lips, receivest Him into a sinful mouth, and placest Him in thy mean breast, enclosing Him really and truly in thy interior ? How is it that thou dost not cry out with a loud voice, saying, ‘ Lord, depart from me, for I am the greatest of sinners ! How canst Thou endure me in Thy sight, my God and my all—I a mere nothing, and a sink of nothingness ? ’ With what reverence, what rapture, what confusion, should you approach to Communion in view of such immense Majesty !

FOURTH POINT.—IN THANKSGIVING.

The Lord turns not Peter from His Presence, but unites him more closely to Himself, and gazes the more lovingly on him because of his humility. He denies him not His countenance, but opens His heart to him ; and, pleased with his modest diffidence, He even entrusts him with His treasures, His most precious pearls, and what He most values, His lambs and the ewes of His flocks. Peter

remained as thankful as he had been retiring, being twice confounded at the repeated benignity of his Lord, and where he before had denied His Presence, now advances proclaiming His praises, repairing by humility his former want of confidence with deep, heartfelt gratitude for his bliss.

O my Lord and all my good! how much more indebted do I acknowledge myself to-day than Peter was; for Thou dost not only allow me to stand in the Presence of Thy infinite mightiness, but Thou deignest to reside really and truly within my breast—Thou in me, and I in Thee, Who art my centre and my every good. Grant me to be as punctual in Thy service as Thou art generous of Thy favours; never permit so privileged and favoured a bosom to prove itself mean and ungrateful, and let the confession of my unworthiness be a continual proclamation of Thy immense glories. Amen.

TENTH MEDITATION.

On receiving the Lord with the assiduity of Martha and the zeal of Mary.

FIRST POINT.—BEFORE COMMUNION.

CONSIDER what must have been the joy of the two sisters, truly such in relationship and in spirit, and what their appreciation of such a favour must have been, when they understood that the Lord was coming to honour them, and their house, with His Presence. With what ardour must the Magdalen have awaited that Lord Whom she before had sought with such anguish, judging herself highly favoured in being received by Him, and who now is singularly blessed in being allowed to entertain Him ! What preparations they must have made for the Guest Whom they were expecting, Whose Majesty and greatness they so well knew ! Great must have been the adornments of their abode, and more so of their hearts—their rich jewels being symbolical of their precious virtues.

Reflect that to-day this same Lord really and truly comes in person as a Guest to the castle of your heart ; see that you entrust Him with the keys of it, namely, your powers and senses, and unite

your will and understanding in rendering service to Him with reverence and zeal, preceded by a great preparation of adornment with the jewels of virtue, a great purity of conscience, and the odours of grace and sanctity.

SECOND POINT.—AT THE TIME OF COMMUNION.

The Divine Master approaches the gates of the castle, displaying a celestial affability in His Divine countenance. The sisters come to receive Him with loving reverence accompanied by all their household, so that everyone might be employed in serving the Lord. How lovingly must they have received Him! how gratefully have saluted Him! Methinks I see Martha very solicitous, and Magdalen endearingly affectionate. With what sovereign sweetness must the Lord have corresponded to their loving solicitude, placing Himself between them in emulation of two Seraphim, both fluttering around Him, the one loving and the other serving! How they must have placed Him in their most adorned spot, which was the centre of their hearts, and there losing no single word of His celestial conversation, and of enjoying His Divine Presence.

Oh you who to-day receive that same Divine Guest—for behold He already comes to the door of your lips, and to the stronghold of your bosom—let your soul, accompanied with all its powers and senses, burst forth with joy to receive Him with the solicitude of Martha and the devotion of Mary, that, animating your faith, strengthening your hope, inflaming your

charity, you may conduct Him to the adoring centre of your heart.

THIRD POINT.—AFTER COMMUNION.

The sisters were divided in their different employments, though they were both directed to the Divine service. Martha busies herself in preparing the material food, Mary remains quietly enjoying the spiritual; Martha prepares the repast, Mary delights in the pasture of celestial doctrine, and accustomed to being at the feet of her Master, where before she had found her pardon, now continues there, soliciting consolation, and she remains loving who was already penitent. What joy must have been hers when thus enjoying His royal, Divine Presence! how absorbed she was in hearing Christ discourse! How highly must she have treasured those words of eternal life! Oh what consolation does a soul experience which remains at the feet of this Lord after having received Him! How profitable then is its prayer! How delightful its communications!

Martha complains to the Lord that her sister had left her to serve alone, confessing the inequality of her occupation, which he weighed at its true value, and answered with deeply magisterial words: 'Martha, Martha, all your solicitude for the needs of the body ends in perturbation, and the only repose is that of the spirit; truly one food only is necessary, and that gives life eternal. Well did Mary know which to choose.'

Listen, O soul! for this same Lord is addressing to thee the same words. Why art thou busied about

perishable goods? Why carest thou for the things of this world? There is no delight equal to the Divine Sacrament. Come to Me and enjoy My sweet Presence, receive Me in thy breast and stay with Me here, for this is the only happiness of the earth, and do not lose the delightful moments of a holy and fervent Communion.

FOURTH POINT.—IN THANKSGIVING.

How grateful must Magdalen have felt at this double favour! how disenchanted of her illusions remained Martha, being convinced that there is no food like the delights of the Lord, feasting upon His celestial doctrine, and enjoying His Divine Presence. Mary answered not a word, since she was all intent upon love and gratitude; for those who, like her, thus receive favours from their God care not for the injuries received from their neighbours, and those who truly love speak with the heart, leaving their actions to prove their words.

Learn, O my soul, to appreciate and be truly thankful; let your sighs be praises, and one Communion be a grateful tribute to a former one. Speak with your heart if you love, and let your only solicitude be to assist and pay homage to the Lord Whom you have received. Cultivate a great loathing for all human delights, and relish only this Divine food; for you have your Lord nearer than Mary had; for not alone does He allow you to be at His feet, but He is within your bosom. Acknowledge, then, your great favour by rendering greater gratitude.

ELEVENTH MEDITATION.

Joseph's Banquet to his Brethren.

FIRST POINT.—BEFORE COMMUNION.

COMPARE the benignity of Joseph with the cruelty of his brethren, who had all conspired to sell him. And whom?—a brother whose tenderness rendered him amiable, and his innocence inoffensive. Why? For no fault of his own, but for those of others. To whom? To those who were as hostile as they were unbelieving, as much barbarian as they were roaming villains. For how much? For the price and innocence of a lamb. With what words? Loading him with sarcasms, calling him a sham prince, deluging him with reproaches for dreaming that the sun* had worshipped him. In what way? Stripping him of his garment—a fine seamless robe. Where do they cast him? Into the desert of an Egypt, into the oblivion of a prison.

My soul, who is the true Joseph, sold, injured, and maltreated? The most benignant Jesus, amiable because He is our Brother, and adorable because He is our Lord. Who sold Him? You, vile ungrateful

* Gen. xxxvii. 9.

creature ! For how much ? At the price of a sordid interest, of a filthy pleasure ! In what way ? By sinning without fear, offending Him without shame ! How often ? Each day, every hour, and each instant ! Be covered with confusion, with far greater reason than were Joseph's brothers, for to-day you are approaching to the Divine Presence, not to the presence of a Governor of Egypt, but to that of the King of Heaven. If the first was disguised, this One is hidden. If the first gave corn, this Lord here gives Himself to you as bread. Acknowledge your treacheries ere you receive His gifts. Ask Him to pardon you before He invites you to His table ; cast yourself at His feet before He seats you at His side ; mingle your tears with His drink, and eat the ashes of your penitence with His dainty bread.

SECOND POINT.—AT THE TIME OF COMMUNION.

Consider with how much love this most meek Joseph met the hatred of his brothers ; he is not satisfied with receiving them into his house, but places them in his inmost heart, exchanging the just vengeance of offence for the endearments of the lover, acknowledging those who would not know him, honouring those who had wronged him, folding in his loving embrace those who had bound him with inhuman cords, and instead of placing a rope around their necks, he returns affectionate embraces. He enriches those who had despoiled him, and fills with gifts those who had offered him nothing but insults. With this he awakens them, who had

thought him asleep, so that they adored truly him whom they had before despised as a dreamer; and not only does he give them the corn which they sought, but he makes them to sit at his own table, and feasts them with a splendid banquet.

O infinite goodness! O incomprehensible benignity of the sweetest Lamb, Jesus! In the same night in which He was given over to His enemies through revenge, He gave Himself to His friends as food, returning sweetness in place of bitterness. He offered His Blood for the salvation of men who were thirsting for that Blood to shed it, and when, through malice, they conspired to destroy Him, He gave them His Body in a banquet of love. He invited to the sweetness of His chalice those who were preparing for Him gall and vinegar, seeking to place within His very breast those who were to open His side with a gash. He took bread into those generous hands of His, which were so soon to be pierced with nails, and reached forth bountifully those arms which were to be stretched out with such cruelty. He sweetens with milk and honey those mouths which are to spit on His face. Sinner! tell me now, can a greater ingratitude be conceived than yours, or greater goodness than that of the Lord? Pay homage to these two extremes, throw yourself at the feet of so good a Brother, owning your sin and soliciting His pardon. He cannot possibly deny it, for He gives Himself to you as food.

THIRD POINT.—AFTER COMMUNION.

Joseph, forgetful of all past injuries, invents new favours for his brethren, and when all the land is perishing of hunger he treats them to a banquet. 'Eat,' he says, 'for I am Joseph; not an enemy, but your own brother; not angry, but full of mercy.' They eat ravenously, he serving them; and when they would have been contented with bread alone to satisfy their hunger, they are regaled with delicious food. They did not envy his superior abundance, but enjoyed its fruits, and the blameless Benjamin, being a ravenous wolf, consumed doubly more than the others.

Oh, you who are seated at the table of the Altar, recognise your good Brother, Jesus, Who not only invites you, but verily gives Himself to you as food. He trusts in you, for He comes into your breast, piercing into your very furthest interior. Beware that you do not turn treacherously against Him by again falling into sin; eat and enjoy the gift, for whilst others are perishing of starvation, you have a surfeit of delights. Eat with awe, and yet with confidence, for this table, being that of your Brother Jesus, is yours also, and He is telling you, 'I am that same Jesus Whom you sold and persecuted; I am not angry but forgiving; come near to Me without mistrust, and lay Me lovingly within your heart.'

FOURTH POINT.—IN THANKSGIVING.

The brothers must have returned home as grateful as they had been satisfied, thankful for the benefits received and the injuries forgotten. How they must have joyously proclaimed their good fortune; for when they had feared chastisements, they only experienced honours and favours! With what diligence must they have gone back to take the good tidings to their father that his son Joseph was alive, that son whom he had believed to have been torn and mangled, and for whom he had so sorrowed! How they must have congratulated themselves and their good father, joining with him in thanksgiving and praises to Heaven, recounting again and again their good fortune, not satisfied that one alone should relate it, but one and all joining in repeating the story!

Soul! he owes more to whom more has been forgiven. What thanks should you render to a Lord Who so often has pardoned you, and seated you at His table! Take the good news to the Celestial Father, and let the new canticles of your gratitude reach to Heaven itself, returning over and over again to renew your happiness by frequenting the table of the Altar.

TWELFTH MEDITATION.

On communicating with the humility of the Publican.

FIRST POINT.—BEFORE COMMUNION.

CONSIDER how this great sinner prepares himself to appear before the Divine Presence : he arms himself with humility. Feeling his deficiency in virtue, he sinks down into the knowledge of himself in order to be able to rise to an infinite height. In himself he finds nothing but sins, in God every mercy. 'Who am I,' he says, 'that I should dare enter into the house of the Lord? I who am so wicked; while He is all goodness: I who am an abominable sinner, and He so amiable a God! I am indeed a vile worm, and as such will approach to His Temple, creeping on the ground. The Lord will add all that may be necessary from His house, for I have nothing, and can do nothing. A monster have I been in sinning, but the Lord is prodigal in pardoning; and being as confident of His bounty as I am full of confusion at my own malice, though I am but dust and filthy clay, I will enter to-day within the doors of His house.'

In going in he meets a Pharisee, and is more abashed still, feeling himself so great a sinner by

the side of one whom he admired as a mirror of virtue, deriving from every circumstance a subject for humiliation.

Reflect, you who to-day are ascending to the Temple, not only to speak to the Lord, but to receive Him, not only to stand in His Presence, but to place Him within your breast—you who are so great a sinner, with what confusion should you approach! Do not ascend as a Pharisee, but as a humble Publican, not walking with the feet of pride, but sunk in the knowledge of your lowliness, confessing your unworthiness and invoking His infinite mercy.

SECOND POINT.—AT THE TIME OF COMMUNION.

Timidly the Publican enters the Temple; he remains afar off through humility, he who had estranged himself by sin, and seeks the lowest place, considering himself the greatest of sinners, not daring even to go near the Pharisee, much less approach to God. He chooses a secluded corner of the Temple, for he does not wish to appear before the world, and even there he judges that he is highly favoured, he dares not even look up to Heaven; for he knows that he has sinned against It; he strikes his breast with repeated blows as well to punish his guilt as to arouse himself from the lethargy of sin, and continues to call out to his heart and to Heaven, imploring that both may be softened, saying, 'Lord, be propitious to me a sinner, as Thou art to all,' as though he said, 'Lord, I am the sinner, Thou the forgiver—great is my misery, but

greater still is Thy mercy.' 'Lord, have mercy on me, according to Thy great mercy, and according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my iniquities.'

Contemplate, O my soul, this example of penitence. If this Publican judges himself unworthy to speak even from afar to his God, who are you to approach and receive Him? He remained in a corner; how can you dare to come up to His Altar? He ventured not to lift his eyes to gaze on God, and you open your mouth to receive Him! He struck his breast before the Lord, and you take and put Him inside your breast. He annihilated himself, because he was a sinner, and you, a greater sinner than he, are not confounded. What are you doing that you do not cry out with a loud voice, saying, 'Lord, be propitious to me also, though I am the greatest of sinners. Lord, great is my confusion, greater be Thy pardon; Lord, in me is all misery, but in Thee is all mercy.'

THIRD POINT.—AFTER COMMUNION.

Oh powerful humility! consider how agreeable that virtue must be to God. The Publican appeared to have nothing of good in him but his humility, and there seemed nothing evil in the Pharisee but his pride. The first was so pleasing to the Lord that it attracted Him to where he was; the other offended Him to such a degree that He altogether left him. The Pharisee's haughtiness drove him from the highest place, and humility raised the Publican from the lowest to the highest, for it is no

new thing for pride to turn Angels into demons, and for humility to make Angels of sinners. The Lord looked on him who had not dared lift his eyes to his God, and He withdrew His eyes off from the one who was so pleased with himself. Divine grace occupied the breast that was so full of confusion, and he who was spurned by the Pharisee is admitted amongst the Angels. The Publican finds himself with his God and Lord within him by grace, receiving Him in his heart. How joyfully he adores Him, how lovingly embraces Him, how full of bliss he enjoys Him !

Soul! approach with humility to the Altar, for thus the Lord desires to be received. There is no more fitting reception for such immense greatness than the knowledge of your own lowliness. Serve Him with diffidence, and you will enjoy Him with greater delight; annihilate yourself to extol His greatness, despise your own nothingness, and you will obtain every gift.

FOURTH POINT.—THANKSGIVING.

With what delight must the Publican have returned ! Being now thoroughly justified, he who had gone up full of sorrow returns home full of consolation. He spoke little when he asked for pardon, much indeed now in thanksgiving. If before he had confessed his faults, now he publishes loudly the mercies of the Lord, giving great bounds of joy with that heart, which had received so many blows of penitence, and that breast which had been so stricken with sorrow now overflows with delight,

returning not by the same path, but by the one of virtue, to receive the immortal crown.

Oh you who have communicated, give thanks to God like the Publican for His pardon of your sins ; not with the Pharisee, vaunting presumed virtues, and making a pompous display of merits, but be thankful for mercies received, returning from the sacred Communion another being, and by a different road, lest if you return by the same way you again become the prey of the passions and past vices that are lying in wait to assault and devour you. If you ascended in tears, return singing joyfully your thanks, and bear with you a soul laden with the bread of Heaven. Praise and extol a Lord Who delights to gaze on the humble.

THIRTEENTH MEDITATION.

On the magnificence displayed by Solomon in the building of the Temple, and on the great preparations for its dedication. Applied to Holy Communion.

FIRST POINT.—BEFORE COMMUNION.

CONSIDER the majestic grandeur of Solomon's Temple. The Almighty allowed not David, the warrior father, to erect it, but the son who was peaceful and learned, it being proper for the wise to love peace. Seven years Solomon spent in building it, dedicating to the work all his wisdom, the greatest that was ever known, and also all his power, which was equal to his wisdom. All this magnificence of riches, art, ornateness, and majesty was employed for the sake of enshrining an ark which was only a shadow, a figure, and representation of the most Divine of Sacraments.

Oh, you who to-day are about to place in your bosom, not the shadow, but the light itself, not the figure, but the reality, not an ark of the testament, but God Himself, reflect what a temple of devotion you should erect within yourself, what a Holy of Holies of perfection and sanctity you should form in the midst of your heart! Solomon employed

seven years in building the material Temple ; do you dedicate at least seven hours in preparing your soul, for a whole eternity of preparation would be sufficient—rivalling with your virtues the precious stones, with the fire of your charity the refined gold, substituting for the aromatic woods fragrant prayers, for the sweet odours sighs, and for the subtilty of art the beauty and loveliness of grace.

SECOND POINT.—AT THE TIME OF COMMUNION.

The festive day of the dedication of the Temple at last dawned, that day so venerable and so much longed for, when all Israel assembled to render homage to their great God. All came robed in garments of joy, and clothed with devotion ; the victims burned as intensely as their inflamed hearts, and, it being a general festival, the great and the little, the poor and the rich, all participated in the universal consolation. Most distinguished amongst all was the pious Prince. Encouraging them by his example, he bent both knees on the ground, and lifted his eyes to Heaven, steadying with his humility the soaring wings of his prayers, which were so efficacious that the Lord was drawn down by his supplications. The Temple was filled with a dense cloud, a fit veil for the uncreated, inaccessible Majesty. The people feeling themselves bathed in consolation, acknowledged the Presence of their God and Lord.

Soul ! with what festive dispositions have you prepared yourself on this the day of your communion ? Remember that your bosom is being

consecrated as a temple and dwelling-place of God Himself. Assemble all your powers on this great solemnity, let your heart be a living Holy of Holies, where the understanding may soar onward like the wings of the Cherubim and the will as an inflamed Seraph and your whole soul joyfully extolling His Holy Name, and your tongue singing His praises. Arise! for the Lord descends hidden in the clouds of the sacramental species into the inmost recess of your heart.

THIRD POINT.—AFTER COMMUNION.

The Wise King enters in, full of joy and astonishment, uttering those memorable words, which are worthy of being repeated by every communicant: 'Is it, then, to be thought that God should indeed dwell upon earth? For if Heaven and the Heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee, how much less this house which I have built?' Even the bare thought is full of awe—God on earth when the heavens cannot contain Him! If the heavens are narrow, what must this house be?

Oh, with how much greater reason can you cry out with a loud voice on this day when you have received the great God of Israel into your bosom, saying: 'Is it possible that my great God deigns to come to me, and that His immensity resides in my breast? Do I truly possess Him in my heart? Is this God, and on earth? God! and in a heart so earthly as mine is, moulded out of clay?' Draw from this consideration a humble confusion, a holy fear, and a grateful acknowledgment.

FOURTH POINT.—IN THANKSGIVING.

It would have seemed, after the performance of such eminent homage, that the Wise King had well acquitted himself; but he felt more than ever the great obligation that he was under after receiving such special favours from this Lord, Who competed with him in giving, and always remained the conqueror. Solomon saw his work accomplished, being honoured with the special assistance of God, and, full of wisdom, he was also overflowing with gratitude; and as many times as voices resounded in praise in that Temple, so often would be renewed his grateful thanksgiving. Nothing else was spoken of through the whole of Idumea, and, indeed, in all the circle of the globe, but the fame of the great God of Israel being as much lauded as it was known.

Ponder, you who this day have received so many favours from the Lord, and the Lord Himself of all favours, how indebted you are to praise and serve Him. Be grateful, if you are wise; let the echoes of your praises resound in your heart; speak of nothing else but of God on the day when you consecrate to Him the temple of your breast, and above all, guard that temple from being profaned either in thoughts, in words, or in deeds, making it a Holy of Holies of perfection, where the fire of Divine love may burn for ever.

FOURTEENTH MEDITATION.

On the fountain of living waters which the Lord opened in the heart of the Samaritan woman. Applied to the Holy Communion.

FIRST POINT.—BEFORE COMMUNION.

O MY good Jesus, my God, and my Lord, with what great thirst didst Thou walk seeking a woman who was so well satisfied with her iniquities: vile indeed she was, but not unfortunate, for she meets with the Source of all happiness. Oh, how much dost Thou show, Lord, how greatly Thou dost estimate souls! Thou wouldst have done for that one soul what Thou hast done for all. What wonder that Thou, Who hadst descended from the highest heavens for our salvation, camest so far to seek her. I am not astonished to see Thee fatigued, for the day will come when Thou wilt sweat blood—blood which will flow from Thy wounds in streams. But how unmindful of Thee does the Samaritan woman approach, and how deeply Thou hast her in Thy memory, and even in Thy heart. Heedless of eternal riches, satisfied with perishable pleasures, she seeks broken cisterns, leaving aside the fountains of living waters. Little did she think to find true joys in

One Whose only solicitude was to seek her. She came in search of water, symbol of unstable delights, and she found the eternal source of grace. O my soul! the same occurs to you to-day. You are lost, and seek perishable joys. The Lord is waiting for you, not at the fountain of Jacob, but at that of the Altar, true and perennial well-spring of His Blood and of His graces. Come and approach thirstily to those five fountains of life. Allow Him to find you, for He is seeking you; make good use of this occasion, and you will extinguish the thirst of your desires. Draw from it a true knowledge of His mercy and of your own misery, your forgetfulness of Him, and of His loving care of you.

SECOND POINT.—AT THE TIME OF COMMUNION.

Christ commences to prepare her to receive His infinite mercies, and He Who was to give begins by asking. He asks of her one drop of water, He Who was to shed every drop of His blood for her. He demands but little, He Who was to bestow so much on her. Oh, how He thirsts to give! how great are His desires for communicating His celestial gifts! 'With desire I have desired,' says the same Lord. He hungers for what we have a surfeit of. Water He asks for, but it is the waters of tears that should wash the soul, and cleanse the conscience, wherein He is to dwell. He thirsts that we may satisfy our thirst.

Attend, my soul! for the same Lord really and truly present in this most Divine Sacrament is speaking to

you and saying, 'Soul, give Me to drink; tears I ask you for. Take compassion on My thirst, which lasted all My life; give Me not the gall of your ingratitude, nor the vinegar of your tepidity. Come, shed at least one tear, for so many sins committed, open the fountains of your eyes for Me Who have opened for you those of My Blood.' Invite your Redeemer with tears of bitterness, that He may immerse you in an abyss of sweetness. Conceive a great contempt for all worldly pleasures, and a great thirst for those joys which are Divine, that you may enjoy for all eternity this everlasting Fountain of grace.

THIRD POINT.—AFTER COMMUNION.

The woman, instead of complying with His request, commenced to dispute with our Lord, but far from turning away from her, the Lord makes use of this moment to favour her. The woman of Samaria considers that she has sufficient reason for questioning His right to a little water, and so does every soul, when it excuses itself for not serving God. Jesus, forgetful of her disservices, and even pressing her for our good, replies, 'O woman! if thou didst know the gift of God, and Who He is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink, and to Whom thou art speaking—to Me, perennial Source of all riches, the Mine of every treasure, the Spring of true consolation—how thou wouldst ask of Me, and I would lavish on thee, not a drop of water, but an entire fountain, flowing with joys and mercies, bounding up to Heaven, and reaching even to life eternal!'

Listen, daughter, and incline your ear, for that same Lord from the Altar is addressing you in the same strains. Oh, if you knew; Oh, if you could comprehend this gift of gifts, this mercy of mercies that you receive when you communicate; if you knew Who this great Lord is Whom you enclose in your breast, your only Good, your Remedy, your Consolation, your Felicity, your Life, and your Centre, the one Who alone can fill your heart and satisfy your desires, how you would ask of Him for that bread of life! how you would frequent more fervently and oftener that fountain of graces—the table of the Altar. Arouse your faith, enkindle your love, and take a deep draught of the copious fountain of His Blood; drink with an insatiable thirst from those five wounds, and be filled, soul, with God,

FOURTH POINT.—IN THANKSGIVING.

No sooner does the Samaritan woman know her Creator and Redeemer, than joyfully she returns, and, from a sinner, becomes a preacher! She turns not her back ungratefully on this Fountain, but leaves it to return changed, and again to approach it with thankfulness. She goes to communicate to others the graces which had been imparted to herself, repaying His mercies in praises, and congratulating herself upon her bliss. She enters the city proclaiming in loud tones the found Messiah; her bosom bursting with joy, she imparts her joy to others—the first-fruits of her charity. She no longer calls the seven,

one by one, for a sinful purpose, but she calls them all in a body to pay homage to Christ.

Consider, my soul, how much more grateful should you prove yourself to this Lord, Who has bestowed on you to-day, not a fountain of water, but all the five streams of His precious blood. Remain, then, bathed in the abyss of His mercies; be grateful, and you will be thankful; make yourself a proclaimer of His gifts, communicating to all, and with all, your great felicity, for it is for this reason that it is called *the Communion*.

FIFTEENTH MEDITATION.

On communicating with reverence like that of the Seraphim who stand around the Throne of God.

FIRST POINT.—BEFORE COMMUNION.

CONTEMPLATE that immense majesty of the Infinite and Eternal God, Whom the Heaven of heavens cannot contain, and, therefore, how much less can this earth of earths receive him! Attended and surrounded is He by the winged hierarchy, in company with the adoring spirits of the just, some being employed in loving, others in contemplating, but one and all in praising and magnifying Him. Well indeed might your soul fail and faint away, with greater reason than did the Queen of the South in the terrestrial palace of Solomon. Turn your eyes of faith on this most Divine Sacrament, and reflect that the same Lord Who sits above on the majestic throne of His infinite greatness really and truly is here, abridged in this Host of loving simplicity—there immense, here contracted; there His majesty demanding reverence, here soliciting from you the perfections due to His love.

Reflect that if you were required to approach Him through angelic choirs made visible, passing through

the midst of the winged hierarchy, with the Cherubim and Seraphim standing on either side of your path, with how great a fear would you proceed, with what timidity ascend! Consider that to-day this very God and Lord you are going to receive in the midst of the invisible choirs; examine diligently and see with what preparations you are approaching, on what wings of love you are drawing near, and let your desire be to rival the Cherubim in knowledge and the Seraphim in love.

SECOND POINT.—AT THE TIME OF COMMUNION.

The glowing spirits ever stand near the Infinite Majesty, and they even assist at the very throne itself, yet they ever desire to approach closer still; for the greater the knowledge of God, the greater is the desire for Him. All on fire are they in the midst of this love Divine, and those who are nearest love not only permits to be close, but they are intimately united, loving much and desiring still more.

O my soul! consider your tepidity, compare your coldness with that fire, and say, 'How dare you draw near with your little fervour to a God Who is a consuming fire! Arouse your powers, your understanding to know Him, your will to love Him; contemplate Him much, loving Him more and more; for what is not granted to the winged spirits in all their greatness is obtained by you in your wretchedness; for not only is it permitted to you to attend on the Lord, as they do, but to touch Him with your lips, to receive Him into your mouth, and even place

Him inside your very breast. To the Seraphim is conceded the favour of serving around the throne of God, and to you the same God ministers as your very food. Little, then, need you envy them their knowledge or their happiness, but only the appreciation in which they are held, and not the favour which they receive.'

THIRD POINT.—AFTER COMMUNION.

The loving spirits conceal their faces, abashed at not loving their God and their Lord as much as they ought, or as much as they would wish, for their capacities are unequal to satisfy their desires; they fold their wings to serve as a veil for their reverential fear; they are ashamed of their unworthiness, and are in confusion at being so close to God; they cover their feet, accusing them of being slow, and of detaining and cramping the movements of their love.

O slothful soul! reflect that if the Seraphim consider themselves unworthy of appearing before the immensity of God, and are full of fear, being face to face with Him, you, so full of imperfections, if not of sins, so cold in His Divine love, so tepid in His Divine service, how is it that you are not confounded to-day at approaching to receive Him, and to make your heart His throne? The Seraphim, whose feet are used to treading on the stars of heaven, deem their steps unhallowed, and you, with your feet so full of the mire of this world, covered with the dust of your nothingness, how can you dare to go near to Him! Be ashamed of your vileness, and let the benignity alone of this Sacramental Lord suffice to

encourage you despite your unworthiness. Supply by your humiliations that which is wanting to you in goodness, so that you may thus attain to receive such great favours.

FOURTH POINT.—IN THANKSGIVING.

The seraphim, sensible of their happiness, are incessant in extolling the Divine greatness, and night and day they repeat 'Holy, Holy,' the emblazoned motto of Divinity. They intone it in choirs, challenging each other to vie in eternal praises, paying in continual canticles their debt of grateful homage, their voices proclaiming for ever the favours of the Lord.

Learn, O my soul, from these great masters of love, how to be grateful; emulate their burning fire by your fervour, striving to equal their worship with your reverence; and if the knowledge of your unworthiness keeps you back, let the thought of your happiness embolden you; match against the fiery zeal of love the extreme depths of humility, and to the height of your flight let the retirement of your lowliness correspond, changing the favours received into graces, and the infinite mercies into eternal praises for all eternity. Amen.

SIXTEENTH MEDITATION.

On communicating as at an uncovered banquet.

FIRST POINT.—BEFORE COMMUNION.

CONSIDER in what manner he who is invited to the table of a great prince prepares himself for making the best use of the occasion; he does not come surfeited beforehand with vile and gross food (for he expects exquisite and rare viands), but fasting, to give a zest to his appetite, and he even takes some exercise to provoke hunger, so that with a healthy craving he may eat heartily and with profit.

Oh, you who to-day are invited to the grandest banquet of the greatest of monarchs, reflect that here everything ceases to be merely great, and passes on into the infinite. The Lord Who invites and the banquet to which He invites are both infinite, the invited guest alone being finite and unworthy. For you all the immensity of God is prepared as food, all the greatness of Heaven is bestowed as a gift, for the bread is of angels, and the meat is no other but the Lord Himself. Approach with your interior perfectly disengaged to receive a God Who fills everything. Do not sit down full of the leeks of

the world to eat the bread of Heaven, for in place of giving you life, this bread would then cause your death; come free from every sin to this banquet which is named 'good grace.' Partake not coldly of this refection, which is supersubstantial, for if you did it would not benefit you; but come arrayed with the flames of fervent prayers, remembering that devotion is the sweetness of this delicious pure food.

SECOND POINT.—AT THE TIME OF COMMUNION.

It is usual at entertainments to have the different dishes uncovered that the guests may choose, each one according to his taste, what best pleases his palate; but when it is a sumptuous banquet in which many and exquisite viands are provided, a memorandum is given to each guest of all that is served, so that each one may reserve his appetite for his favourite dish.

Oh, you who to-day are seated at the infinitely dainty banquet which the power of the Father celebrates, arranged by the wisdom of the Son, and prepared with the fire of the Holy Ghost, note that the precious refectations are covered over by the accidents of bread. Advance, and with faith proceed to uncover and examine each one, that, knowing what is laid before you, you may eat to your profit. A memorandum is given you of these miraculous viands—*Memoriam fecit mirabilium suorum*. Read it with attention and you will find that it says: 'Here is served a Lamb nourished at a virginal breast, and prepared at the fire of His love.'

THIRD POINT.—AFTER COMMUNION.

Where tastes differ, there is no disputing, some appreciating one thing, others another; this guest relishing best the 'sweetness of the childhood of Jesus, another the bitterness of His Passion; this one the sharpness of His reproaches, that one the marvellous points of His expressions, each one selecting what seems to him most suitable. Moreover, in the same manner as those who partake of material food linger on the morsel which they relish best, saying, 'Let us enjoy this food leisurely, that we may derive from it profit,' so should it be in this Sacramental Banquet: some with the Beloved Disciple lean on the breast of their Master, and like eagles feast on His loving Heart; others, like the Magdalen, seek His feet, where they find the pasture of their humility; another with Saint Bernard runs to the open Side; this one, with Saint Catherine, clasps His thorned Head; and there are not wanting those who would fain steal from Judas that cheek which he so unworthily used, and which profited him nothing because he approached it surfeited with wickedness.

Approach, O my soul, to this feast, and enjoy what most delights you, though everything is good and well arranged if partaken of with a wholesome appetite. But eat, like an angel, the Bread of angels; eat like a rational being, not as a beast, unthankfully, for where the Body of the Lord is, there are congregated the veritable eagles.

FOURTH POINT.—IN THANKSGIVING.

The delighted guests linger at the table conversing with the lord of the banquet, and praising his entertainment, gratitude not being the least mark of thankfulness ; one praises this dainty, another that, each guest, according to the delight he experienced, extolling the abundance of the repast, lauding the arrangements and admiring the gifts, thanking the host for his feast, and thus inducing him to speedily arrange another for them.

Soul! much hast thou here to celebrate. Praise God, for thou hast partaken of God ; render Him eternal thanks for an infinite refection ; remain in prayer, which is to converse with the Lord after the banquet, and having received Him, show thy appreciation of the gift by knowing how to praise Him.

SEVENTEENTH MEDITATION.

On receiving the Lord with the desire and joy of the aged
Holy Simeon.

FIRST POINT.—BEFORE COMMUNION.

REPRESENT vividly to yourself this scene in the Temple, note with what grace enters into it the Holy Virgin, Phoenix of Purity, bringing with her two spotless doves, whilst to meet her a swan glides softly forth, which, both by the streams flowing from its eyes, and by its voice, sings sweetly of its approaching death; nor is there wanting even a widowed turtle-dove who no longer laments her solitude, but prophesies her consolation. Consider how Holy Simeon prepared himself on that day for receiving into his arms the Lord. It is not said that he was aged, but *just* and *fearing* the Lord, for in His holy service age is not computed by the number of years, but of merits; and *fearing*, for he who is to receive Him must fear Him. His arms trembled not so much from age as from the diffidence proceeding from his delicate and sensitive conscience. Oh, great disposition! First replenishing with the Divine Spirit his soul, ere he takes into his arms the Incarnate Word, he hearkened to the answer of

the One Divine Person, and thus obtained the favours of the other.

Reflect, my soul, that to-day you are to receive the same Child Jesus, no longer wrapped in swaddling clothes, but covered with the sacramental accidents. Should you not then prepare yourself the whole of your life? for if the Holy Simeon in order merely to press Him once to his breast so exercises himself in virtues for many years, how can you with so little preparation place Him within your heart? Simeon, to embrace Him once, prepared himself during many years, and you, who receive Him so often, scarcely prepare your soul during one single day.

SECOND POINT.—AT THE TIME OF COMMUNION.

Simeon's life was swiftly passing, but his hopes were strengthened day by day, for Heaven fulfils its promise better than does the world. He came to the Temple at the instant when the Aurora dawned, and opening those eyes weary of weeping, he recognised the Divine Sun enclosed in the appearances of its humanity. He was not satisfied with looking once only upon Him for Whom he had so longed; he gazed long and earnestly on that tender Humanity, while he adored the Divinity. He saw a little child, and adored an Infinite God, venerating in an infant a few days old the Prince of Eternity.

Soul! understand that you are seeking to-day in the Temple the same Child-God. Consider whether the Holy Spirit is guiding you, or only custom; open wide the eyes of faith, and you will see a treasure of

wonders: in a small Host an immense God, an infinite substance covered with the accidents; in a morsel the whole of Heaven; and in daily bread an Eternal God—such will you receive.

THIRD POINT.—AFTER COMMUNION.

The holy old man, no longer satisfied with only gazing upon Him, is emboldened after being so favoured, and taking courage, changes fear into zeal, and that white swan with saintly purity expands its wings, soaring to approach nearer, and from being content with looking upon Him proceeds to embrace Him. He asks of the Virgin to be permitted to hold for a while Him whom he had longed to have for eternity, and she liberally grants the favour—she who, united to God, ever pleads for each one—and so into his arms he takes Him which was to encircle the whole of Heaven; *accepit eum in ulnas suas*. In that instant the swan was changed into a seraph, alternating tears with fiery darts of love. How closely Simeon must have embraced Him! what tender expressions he must have used! and deeming that nothing else was left for him to look upon, he contemplates Him with his eyes closed, and having nothing more to desire, he asks permission to die, for to separate him from that embrace was to part him from life.

Soul! behold here your happiness, and learn how to obtain it. You have the same Christ of the Lord, not only in your arms, but within your bosom. Nor are you permitted to adore Him only and to kiss Him, as was granted to Simeon, but actually to receive,

eat, and be nourished by Him. This being your bliss, how great should be your consolation? This is the favour of your God, how great then is your love? What more can you desire in this life, after having attained to receiving Him in Holy Communion? Entreat that you may die to this world and live to God, not in the flesh but in the spirit, and on this day more than ever let your conversation be in heaven.

FOURTH POINT.—IN THANKSGIVING.

Simeon, deeply conscious of the Divine favours, but with little life left to spend in gratitude, and feeling unable from his failing strength to render due thanks, chooses rather to yield up his life. He could not contain himself from loudly publishing the Divine mercies, sweetly singing them like a divine swan, and bidding adieu to every object which was less than God. Not content with remaining alone in his happiness, he holds it forth to every land, communicating it to all the people as the light of the eyes of all the world and the glory of the people Israel. Imitate him to-day in gratefulness, you who have communicated; and having exceeded Simeon in bliss—for once only was he allowed to hold the Child-God in his arms, whilst you are so often permitted to receive Him into your breast—be truly thankful. Break forth in new canticles, emulating this sweetest of singers, who, in closing his eyes to all terrestrial blessings, opens his lips to sing the Divine glories. Shut your heart to the world, and open it wide for God alone, confessing Him in the council of the just and in the congregation of the upright ones.

EIGHTEENTH MEDITATION.

On receiving the Lord in the three chambers of the soul.

FIRST POINT.—BEFORE COMMUNION.

CONSIDER the majestic grandeur of the Infinite Guest Whom this day you expect, and you will understand how you are to receive Him, and in what manner offer Him homage, emulating the three costly chambers which a great monarch is related to have prepared for his guests. The first was of refined silver, the second of burnished gold, the third of brilliant precious stones; but though so dazzling were the perfections of the materials employed, they were not to be compared to the exquisite beauty of the art and workmanship, which united wisdom with power. Into one of these different chambers were the guests received according to their dignity and rank: the nobles in the one of silver, the grantees in that of gold, and the princes in the one of precious stones.

Reflect and ponder, O my soul, into which of these chambers dost thou propose receiving a Lord for Whom the wings of the Cherubim are mean, the throne of the seraphim small, and the Heaven of heavens narrow? Perchance in an enlightened

mind? in an inflamed will, or in a grateful memory?—even this would be little—in a fervent breast, a tender interior, an enamoured heart? All this is but nothing. In a degree of perfection far surpassing every other, rising from virtue to virtue? This is insufficient. What, then, wilt thou do? Clothe thyself, as the Apostle says, with the Lord Himself, transforming thyself into Him, and let each Communion be a preparation for the next.

SECOND POINT.—AT THE TIME OF COMMUNION.

Some of the faithful communicate, receiving the Lord in the first chamber, that of silver, but never proceed beyond; they are satisfied with merely being in a state of grace, and aspire not to a higher perfection. It is much indeed to be esteemed, this cleanliness of conscience, this purity of heart; for a contrite heart stricken with the marks of penitence was never despised by the Lord.

O my soul, endeavour to acquire, in the first place, this whiteness of grace, this purity of justification, washing the stains of sin in the strong waters of tears, leaving no blot whatever that could offend the most chaste eyes of a Guest Who is called 'the Holy One'; but you, my soul, be not satisfied with these bounds rather of conscience than of the spirit; greater homage is necessary of devotion as well as of perfection.

THIRD POINT.—AFTER COMMUNION.

Purer still and more thoughtful are other souls, who dispose themselves to receive this great Sacramental King in the chamber of the gold of an ardent charity, making of their hearts a furnace for a God Who comes to cast fire, and which, being a consuming one, consumes imperfections and enkindles hearts.

Consider whether you have up to this day received this Infinite Guest in the golden chamber of perfect love. Let the icy coldness of your heart be melted in view of this loving fire, your tepidity changed into red-hot gold. In flame your will, purify every affection, and let there shine through you an intense love for Jesus in the Sacrament.

FOURTH POINT.—IN THANKSGIVING.

Be not satisfied. Further still must the soul reach ere it receives this Lord in the chamber of precious jewels, and, if it were possible, in one formed of stars, embellishing the gold of charity with every virtue. Some souls receive their Lord in the midst of the dazzling diamonds of courage, with firm and efficacious purposes of sooner dying than committing the least wilful imperfection, surrounded by the emeralds of hope and of patience, not only enduring adversities with resignation, but with joy and consolation; amongst the topazes of mortification in all things and in every place, and in the midst of the peerless pearls of angelic purity; in

the radiant carbuncles of the greater glory of God, in the centre of burning rubies of doing always what is most perfect, in brilliant jewels forming seraphic flames, never ceasing to aspire to greater love and a more perfect knowledge.

O my soul, may you receive Him in this chamber and with this perfection, crowned with virtues, filled with gifts, all enraptured and transformed in the Lord. Amen.

NINETEENTH MEDITATION.

The feast of the five loaves applied to the Sacred Communion.

FIRST POINT.—BEFORE COMMUNION.

MEDITATE to-day how the crowds followed the Lord, not only strong men but weak women and tender children—for it belongs to all to serve God and to reign with Him. So delighted were they at listening to His celestial doctrine that they were quite forgetful of material food, so that three days of fasting preceded its reception, that with greater profit and pleasure they might receive this miraculous nourishment. Their hunger gave them a zest, for that which they received passed into interiors free of all terrestrial food—in a desert, not in the midst of the noisy market-place, the Lord arranges the feast.

Reflect, my soul, that if such preparation was requisite for that miraculous bread, what preparations can suffice for approaching to partake of the bread which comes down from heaven—that super-substantial Bread? Let its reception be preceded by abstinence from all vile mundane delights. Approach with a virginal palate, and with a disburthened interior, the exercise of virtues and the

labours of mortification serving to give a zest to your hunger. Practise a great retirement from men, so as to be able to relish the bread of angels, communing with God, which is to live in God. All these dispositions should you bring with you to obtain the possession of this Divine Bread with delight of spirit and profit to the soul.

SECOND POINT.—AT THE TIME OF COMMUNION.

The Lord was careful of those who had so forgotten themselves. Having proved their faith, He crowned their confidence. After giving them the support of their souls, which is holy doctrine, He attends to the wants of the body by giving them food—for He Who feeds the lowest worms of the earth will not forget the children of His affections. He consults with the Apostles, the ministers of His table and the dispensers of His graces. A boy was found who had five loaves and two fishes; a child he must have been, the temptations to gluttony being as natural to childhood as temptations to vanity are to an older period. Yet this must have happened through the foresight of one of the disciples having regard for the Celestial Master, Who would not allow of any other delicacy to be provided but a barley loaf—He Who so bountifully provides for all His creatures.

Consider, O soul, how much less it costs you than it did the multitudes to find the Celestial Manna. You have not to travel into the desert as they did, weary and footsore, but in every place you have it; and if this Bread were to be bought at the price of

money, we would fain ask St. Philip its priceless worth. It is not, however, obtained with gold, but at the price of desires and love; free of all cost is it given you. Know and appreciate your happiness, for the Lord regales you not merely with bread, but with His own Flesh and Blood, which are the delights of kings.

THIRD POINT.—AFTER COMMUNION.

In the midst of that country, encircled with countless multitudes of people, stood the Lord, the centre of their hope and confidence, and the delight of their heart. He bids the Apostles tell them to sit down, that they might eat in good order, and with peace, seated on the grass—not so much for comfort as to dispel the illusion of human frailty. He took a loaf into His hands and raised His eyes to Heaven, to teach us to acknowledge that every good gift comes from above. He blessed and divided it, and then the pieces were multiplied by thousands, both His hands seeming to be two perennial fountains of bread, which the Apostles unceasingly distributed as quickly as it came from His hands. The bread being miraculous, how delicious it must have been! The guests being hungry, with what delight must they have partaken, as much astonished at the prodigy as that the food was savoury!

Imagine yourself invited to-day by the same Lord in the midst of the wide fields of His Church, and that in the centre of the crowds of the faithful you approach to participate of this miraculous bread. Consider how much more delicious and more

savoury is the food of which you partake ; for if that bread came as it did from the Hands of Christ, in this are contained His own miraculous Hands themselves ; the multitudes ate the bread of the Lord, and you receive the Lord Who gives the bread. Eat with delight, for It is given you with love ; receive It frequently, for It is communicated to you most abundantly, and if you would have partaken of a single morsel of that wonderful bread with unspeakable delight, approach to receive this with much greater joy, for you come to taste the sweetness of the whole of the Lord Himself.

FOURTH POINT.—IN THANKSGIVING.

So gratefully did the well-satisfied guests feel, that they wished to make Christ their King, for such princely actions merited great thanks from His subjects. They had found in Him a physician, and now they saw in Him a Father, having a house full of bread. They judged He was born to be their Prince and they were not deceived, for no other would be found with more bountiful hands or a larger heart.

Soul, what gratitude do you show to a Lord Who has thus provided nourishment, not only for one day, but for the whole of your life ? How often have you found in Him your Physician ! How many times have you experienced in Him the love of a Father ! Pay homage to Him to-day as your King and Lord, offering Him eternal vassalage. Renounce the tyrannies of Satan ; die to sin and live to grace, subjecting yourself to the Infinite Majesty for all ages. Amen.

TWENTIETH MEDITATION.

The finding of the honeycomb by Samson applied to the Holy Communion.

FIRST POINT.—BEFORE COMMUNION.

CONSIDER that the tearing of a lion to pieces preceded the finding in its mouth of a luscious honeycomb, to show how necessary it is first to overcome difficulties if we desire to obtain the fruits of victory, changing the bitterness of mortification into the sweets of reward, for thus it occurs daily in the exercise of virtues. Patience is turned into peace, tears are changed into laughter, afflictions into consolations, fasting into health of body and soul, and virtues which appear formidable as lions, when once they are tasted, prove delicious honeycombs. But how well did Samson prepare himself for obtaining the prize, how courageous was he in the encounter, how silent on the achievement, how liberal of the prize that he found, well meriting to find in it every sweetness.

Consider, my soul, that if to-day thou art come to enjoy the sweetness of the Divine honeycomb, so much the more delicious as it is so much the more marvellous, the bread of angels, and honey, worked

by the bees of heaven, hidden in virgin wax, the chosen amongst thousands, selected of the flowers of virtues, thou must prepare thyself first to combat with nothing less than lions, for thou must break in pieces thy king of vices, thy predominant passion, the one which so often has done thee great injury.

SECOND POINT.—AT THE TIME OF COMMUNION.

The royal beast attacks Samson in the open road, where the faint-hearted fear most, and would fain turn back from the work which they have commenced ; but the Nazarite, being so mortified, took courage, and being accustomed to overcoming difficulties, boldly entered upon the contest—this brave resolution of taking hold of the lion by the throat being very important—and he broke the animal's jaws in punishment of its intention of devouring him.

Reflect, you who are striving to follow the path of virtue, and frequenting the sacred Communion, that you will be assailed by frightful difficulties. The infernal lion of sin will attack you to devour you before you partake of that honeycomb full of the sweetest honey of the Divinity, and even should he be unable to turn you from your good intentions, he will endeavour to distract you, and deprive you of the sweetness of devotion, and cool the ardour of your fervent desires. You will be, perhaps, more tempted than ever on the day of your Communion. Resolve not to be overcome, but with valiant resolution trample under foot every impediment.

THIRD POINT.—AFTER COMMUNION.

Once again Samson returns to the road in quest of the lion to renew the joys of victory. He sought the strong and found what was sweet; he expected to meet a lion and found a honeycomb. This gave him great joy, although he was struck with wonder at the sight. He shrank not with awe nor did he show contempt, but taking it from the very throat of the beast, he put it into his own mouth, and tasting its sweetness, he was pleased with its deliciousness, and enjoyed the fruit of his labours. He invited his mother to the feast and those who accompanied her, not so much to boast of his valour as to communicate to them what he had found.

Approach to-day, my soul, to the fierce lion of a difficulty overcome by virtue, of a temptation broken, and if you would consider it in a more mysterious manner, approach to the dead Lion of Juda, and take the sweetest Sacramental Honeycomb from that Mouth which was once embittered with gall. Take It from that torn bosom, taste and see how sweet the Lord is, receive It with devotion, and you will taste in It every sweetness and delight, relishing the milk and honey that flow from the tongue of the Divine Spouse.

FOURTH POINT.—IN THANKSGIVING.

The valiant Nazarite was so proud of his good fortune, and so pleased with his marvellous honeycomb, that he made a boast of its sweetness, and to celebrate the event more solemnly, he propounded a

mysterious riddle, offering prizes to those that could solve it, as a feast of the intellect.

O happy soul, let this Sacramental Honeycomb be your standard and your joy, celebrating it for your greater glory, giving thanks to the Lord in praises. Let your gratitude prove that you are enjoying Him, showing the mellifluousness of your tongue by the sweetness of your canticles, singing the glories of the Lord with a mouth which has been sweetened with His Body and Blood, and sending up to Heaven the praise of a Bread that came down from above.

TWENTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

The banquet of Simon the leper and the penitence of Magdalen applied to the Sacred Communion.

FIRST POINT.—BEFORE COMMUNION.

CONTEMPLATE to-day how lovingly the Lord accepts the invitation of a leper, and thereby heals a sinner. He is not attracted by the delicacies offered by Simon, but thirsting for the bitter tears of Magdalen. He is the invited one, and Magdalen is His guest, who, the instant she knew the Lord, also knew herself, His grandeur and her lowliness, His love and her coldness. She compared Divine goodness with her human ingratitude, and she who so sought to be loved no sooner became conscious of His Infinite Love than she gave herself up to It, and learning where the Divine loadstone of her soul was, not caring what men might think, but only what God would say, she despoiled herself of every profane ornament to clothe herself in penance, the livery of Heaven, which is the immortal stole. In this manner, pierced with love and wounded with sorrow, she flies seeking her beloved.

Reflect how well this novice in discipleship prepared herself, and what great dispositions she had

for inviting herself, not to the delights of the feast, but to the sighs of her heart. Contemplate thyself, my soul, covered with sins, despoiled of grace. How then shouldst thou dispose thyself to enter into the feast, no longer of the leprous Simon, but of the delectable Jesus in the Holy Sacrament. Make, then, a brave resolution of renouncing the world and all its pomps, and in garments of penitence cast thyself at the feet of that Lord Who so mercifully awaits thee in this banquet.

SECOND POINT.—AT THE TIME OF COMMUNION.

Christ sat at meat when that sinner, hungering for Him, weary of the poison of her sins, came in to offer to the Lord her tears. She entered without knocking, called by the impulse of grace, and though any time or instant is proper for approaching to God, she judged the moments of a feast more opportune for obtaining mercies in the midst of delights. She dares not meet Him face to face, for she feels that she deeply offended His countenance, and her own is covered with shame and with sin ; so she comes behind His back, that back which she has so torn with the stripes of her iniquities, and falls at the feet of the Divine Hunter of souls, wounded by the dart of love.

Soul, follow this Magdalen, for thou hast no lack of sins. Go full of repentance ; go with her in tears, for thou hast exceeded her in offences. Thrust thyself into this banquet of the Altar, far more abundant and delicious than was that of the Pharisee, and where thou wilt not be slighted, but

be gladly received and welcomed, not sweeping the floors, but treading on Heaven. Ask Magdalen to spare thee one of Christ's Feet, that thou mayest bathe it whilst she washes the other with her tears. Learn from this disciple of the Lord lessons of penitence, joining now thy sorrow with hers, that she may accompany thee in thy consolation hereafter.

THIRD POINT.—AFTER COMMUNION.

Magdalen shed a sea of tears to free herself from the abyss of her sins, watering the feet of Christ with her bitter tears, wiping them with her hair, and saluting them as many times as she had sinned, giving herself up completely to her Beloved. She who had denied Him everything now gives up to Him all her powers and senses, and, more than all, her heart. She bathed His Feet in the two fountains of her eyes, pressing them to her lips, holding them in both her lovely hands, and with her fair locks wiping them, consecrating to God all that she had formerly in every way so profaned.

Reflect, O you who have communicated, on your greater happiness and your lesser merits, for if Magdalen held the Feet of Christ, you receive Him whole and entire. Not only do you, like her, hold Him in your hands, but heart to heart; she offered Him her tears, the Lord invites you to His Blood: she wiped His Feet with her hair, you entwine Him within your heart. Employ, then, your soul and all your powers to serve Him the day you receive Him, adoring Him the livelong day.

FOURTH POINT.—IN THANKSGIVING.

The Pharisee censured Magdalen for what she was doing, not for what she had done, the world ever being a censurer of virtue and an advocate of vice. But with far different eyes from those of the world did the Lord look upon her, for He began to relate to the guests the services of Magdalen, and to make them conscious of Simon's omissions. 'Thou,' He said, 'gavest Me no kiss, and she all this time has not ceased to kiss My Feet; thou gavest Me no water for My Feet, and she with her eyes has served Me; thou didst not spend even a drop of oil on My Head, and she has poured on My Feet most precious balsam; thou gavest Me no towel with which to wipe My Hands, and she has wiped My Feet with the beauteous tresses of her golden hair.'

Listen, soul! For that same Lord is telling thee the same to-day, when thou hast received Him, not only into thy house, but into thy breast. Soul! thou gavest Me not the kiss of peace, after so many of treachery and of sinful hostilities; thou hast shed no tear of tenderness, whilst I am washing thee in My very Blood. What little fragrance of virtues hast thou yielded, and how cold, deficient and gross hast thou been! Exchange your shortcomings into gratefulness, for you have exceeded Magdalen in receiving greater favours; endeavour, then, to equal her in her love. Hear what Christ is telling you: 'Go in peace, for thou art in My grace, thou whom I had hitherto considered as lost,' and do thou answer Him thus: 'My God and my Lord, sooner would I lose a thousand lives than offend Thee again.'

TWENTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

On the lost sheep found and regaled with the Bread of Heaven.

FIRST POINT.—BEFORE COMMUNION.

CONTEMPLATE this simple lamb deceived in her pleasures, and carried away by her desires; how she separates herself from the flock, and is removed far from her Shepherd, being lost when most pleased, satisfying her appetite in the verdant pastures of her delights, and saying, Let there be no ground that I may not pass and repass, delighting my tastes. Oh, how she exchanges the securities of grace for the evident risks of sin! and forgetful of the loving tenderness of a good Shepherd who defends her, she exposes herself to the dangers of being devoured by wolves.

Reflect, O my soul, on the many times that you have done the same. In you is verified the parable, and the infernal wolf is in your soul; you are that sheep, as simple as it was erring; you left the pleasant meadows of grace to dwell in the shadow of death, leaving the Good Shepherd, Who purchased you with His life, and marked you with His Blood, to follow a cruel lion, who seeks you only to devour you. Be enlightened, and see your error; acknow-

ledge your danger, bleat that your Pastor may hear you, call Him with the voice of your sighs, and striking your breast, appeal to Him for mercy with the murmur of your sobs.

SECOND POINT.—AT THE TIME OF COMMUNION.

As soon as the watchful Shepherd misses His thoughtless lamb He turns the peace of His hut into anxiety and solicitude to find her. Behold He cometh 'leaping on the mountain, skipping on the hills,' and she is in the valley of her sin. Oh, what sorrows are her pleasures costing Him, what bitterness her sweetnesss, what gall her honeycombs! He walks amongst thorns whilst she is wandering amongst flowers; He is without food and she is revelling in her pasturage. The thorns and brambles are tearing His garments even to making Him bleed. He tarries not until He reaches the top of the mountains, the better to see and discover her. He tears off His robes and climbs a tree, where, placed on its highest point, He extends His arms on two branches, and from thence hangs, holding on with great pain. He commences to call her with loud cries, and even with tears; the heavens hear Him for His reverence, but the lamb renders herself deaf in her obstinacy. At length, feeling that He can no longer speak, He inclines His head, making signs to her, for He will sooner cease to live than cease to call her, and not content with this, He suffers His breast to be opened to show her His loving Heart.

O soul! O lost sheep! how long will the hardness

of your heart continue? Recognise your Divine Shepherd and appreciate what you are costing Him. For you He left heaven, and descended to the earth; He sweated blood; with stripes His shoulders were scourged, and with thorns His brows were pierced; He was loaded with the Cross, and fell with it, borne down under its weight; He ascended Calvary, and they cast lots on His vesture; naked He climbed the tree of your remedies, there extended His Arms. Do not you hear Him, how He calls you with sighs and with tears? Behold! He bows His Head, and persevering in calling you, He opens His Side to show you His Heart. Quit now the base pleasures of this wretched earth, that you at length may enjoy the delicious pasture of the Altar which is the paradise of the Church.

THIRD POINT.—AFTER COMMUNION.

The Good Shepherd, having found His lost sheep, returns from death to life, and with what tenderness does He receive her into His Arms, which had been ever open for her. He chides her not angrily, but full of compassion, embraces her, and taking the delicious bread from His bosom, invites her with it, and confers it with His right hand. From His Arms He places her on His Shoulders, and if before He had been heavily laden with the weight of her sins, now, solaced with her sweet weight, He takes her to the secure fold, and joins her to the other ninety-nine. How full of joy does He go with her, and how happy is she with Him. 'My Beloved to me, and I to my Beloved,' she says, 'all entire, and with a whole heart.'

Consider yourself to-day, my soul, favoured by the Divine Pastor, clothed with the white robe, and regaled with the Bread of Heaven—for He is both your Shepherd and your pasture. With blood He redeemed you, and with blood He nourishes you. He takes you on His Shoulders; do you carry Him in your bosom? He tears open His Side; do you place Him within your breast? Partake with delight of this Bread, which came down from the bosom of the Father; feed on Him, and you will know the difference between this Food of Angels and the vile food of beasts.

FOURTH POINT.—IN THANKSGIVING.

Bleating goes the found lamb, returning thanks to her Good Shepherd, and publishes with loud cries His favour, saying, 'O my beloved Pastor, oh, how much do I owe Thee! oh, who could repay Thee? Other shepherds eat their sheep, and I eat my Shepherd; they shear them to clothe themselves, and Thou despoilest Thyself of Thy garments to cover me; they flay them, and Thou remainest torn to cure me; they drive them with crooks, and Thou placest me on Thy shoulders; others cripple them, and Thou healest me; others hurl their sheep down, whilst Thou carriest me.'

What thanks can I render Thee, my Lord, for so many mercies? May my fervour correspond with Thy favours; may I sing for all eternity a new canticle, joining my cries to those of the celestial flocks who are praising and lauding Thee for all ages of ages. Amen.

TWENTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

On the bad preparation of the man who was cast forth from the banquet.

FIRST POINT.—BEFORE COMMUNION.

CONSIDER the care which those guests who were invited bestowed in fitly adorning themselves to appear before the Royal Presence. Knowing that it was a king who invited them, they were not satisfied with any common raiment, but procured the greatest in life, that of the wedding-day, showing by their vesture the estimation in which he was held, exterior ornateness being an index and even a proof of the interior, no ordinary ornamentation being sufficient for a day so solemn as that of being invited by a king. It was necessary that it should be even precious and rich enough for royal eyes, which are accustomed to beholding great wealth. So these guests came in bridal array that they might be admitted with courtly honours.

Soul, to-day thou art invited by the greatest King to the grandest of all banquets; consider well the obligation of adorning thyself. It is not sufficient to come neatly attired, but richly. It is not enough to approach free from the stain of sins, but yielding

the fragrance of every virtue, any indifferent robing being inadequate for Divine Eyes, which are used to beholding the vesture of Angels. Endeavour, then, to come in clothed in grace to sit at the royal table.

SECOND POINT.—AT THE TIME OF COMMUNION.

The guests being fitly arrayed and all seated according to their rank, there attempted to come in and take a seat amongst them one not having on a wedding-garment, and with as little timidity as he was unadorned, for audacity is the venture of villainess. He, with unwashed face and soiled hands, smelling too of the vile odour of uncleanness, enters that chamber which was a type of heaven with as much hardness as the guests felt sorrow, and as the black crow introduces himself amongst the snow-white swans. The guests made no remark, being spotless, leaving the duty of reproof to the master of the house. The intruder judged, like a fool, that the King would not see him, as He sat behind the curtains, or that, being merciful, He would overlook his audacity as he had passed by his faults so often. But he was mistaken, for insults offered face to face, and offences so patent, are not allowed to go unpunished, if only for an example.

Ponder with fear on such a mean outrage, no longer attempted by another, but by thy own self; imagine that thou already feelest the sharp knife on thy neck. When thou comest to sit at the table of this Prince, do not approach clothed with thy passions, do not come with the stain of sin,

view thyself in the mirror of others, and in the clear crystal of a faithful examen prove thyself, for thou art man ; do not confide in the fact that the King is hidden behind the curtains of the accidents, for He, being jealous as a spouse, watches ensconced within the screens of His concealment, and from behind the lattices of His observations.

THIRD POINT.—AFTER COMMUNION.

All the guests were ready and seated, desiring to enjoy the dainty viands of the royal table, when the King in person entered in, not trusting to other than His own eyes the inspection of this feast. Inspecting all the guests, one by one, He noticed amongst them an individual who was different from the others, and therefore rendered the more remarkable. Offensive and disgusting as he was by his loathsomeness, he was even more so by his boldness ; but the King, tempering his indignation with goodness, said, 'Friend, how camest thou here ; thou, and in this place, and without a nuptial garment ?' He called him 'Friend,' comparing him to the first traitor who profaned this table. The hapless one had no answer to make, so clearly convicted was he, for he eats his own judgment whosoever without judgment eats at this table ; for here is the Judge and the judgment, and, no further proof being necessary, the sentence was in that instant fulminated, that he should be turned away, and be thus chastised with the greatest of all punishments, the privation of beholding His countenance, he

being cast forth for his unworthiness into exterior darkness.

O thou who art seated at the table of the Altar, consider and take heed, for the same misery may befall thee. Listen to the Divine King, for He speaks to thee: 'Friend, how hast thou dared to enter here, thou, an unworthy sinner, into the chamber of purity itself, and the very centre of sanctity? What has become of the adornment of virtue? Where didst thou leave the garments of grace? What sayest thou? What answer dost thou make? Art thou also struck dumb?'

Oh how confused must the unprepared guest have felt between those two bitter cups of gall, dishonour and hunger! Reflect, then, and derive from this meditation a well-prepared admonition, and a reverential fear, ever seeking to draw a large disposition of graces, that you may not fall into the greatest of all misfortunes.

FOURTH POINT.—IN THANKSGIVING.

How rejoiced must the other guests have felt at their happiness! How they must have raised their hands to Heaven, rendering reiterated thanks to the King for His banquet! How they must have praised Him!

Attend now, and give thanks to the Lord Who holds you by His hand; consider that in the hands of God is your lot; do not be struck dumb through guiltiness, but praise God Who pardons you, and as you value your happiness, thank Him for His mercies;

sit at His table as a welcome guest, and not as one who ought to have been reduced to ashes by the lightning of His wrath. Sing as one who has been sumptuously entertained; and being well satisfied, praise a Lord Who granted you to finish this banquet in peace, and Who fed you with the fat of wheat.

TWENTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

On the happiness of Miphiboseh at being seated at the royal table—applied to the Holy Communion.

FIRST POINT.—BEFORE COMMUNION.

CONSIDER the astonishment it must have caused Miphiboseh to be summoned by King David to come and sit at his side, and eat from his own table. His mind must have revelled with delight, and his humility have marvelled at seeing himself so honoured by royal favour, he who was so disfavoured by nature, and had been dispossessed of his fortune, the son of a prince who had passed away, poor, forsaken, and forgotten because he had been deprived of his property, lame in body, and broken in spirit, on account of so many imperfections, as well as so many humiliations. He must have compared the greatness of the King with his own lowliness, saying, 'Am I, who have nothing to put into my mouth, to sit at the royal table, with a King to help me, when no one would demean himself to serve me?' And shrinking into himself because of his unworthiness, yet encouraged, seeing that the King so honoured him, 'What must I appear,' he said, 'so full of imperfections, in the midst of so

much grandeur! But, at least, his great goodness will supply for my unworthiness.'

Imagine thyself another Miphiboseth, with far more imperfections in thy soul than he had in his body, ever lame in the Divine service, malformed by sin and bent to the very earth, son and grandson of parents the enemies of the Lord, and thou a greater sinner than they, and nevertheless another and a greater King than David, being Monarch of heaven and earth, invites thee to His table, and even serves thee! Compare thy vileness with His greatness, His infinitude with thy lowliness, drawing from thence a great confusion, humbling thyself as one that has fallen, yet encouraged, seeing how favoured thou art.

SECOND POINT.—AT THE TIME OF COMMUNION.

Miphiboseth endeavours to array himself fitly in order to appear in the royal presence; covering his defects by adornments, he comes not loathsome, thus increasing the offensiveness of his presence, but clothed in festive garments, the better to conceal his defects. With what humility must he have entered the palace! How humbly he prostrated himself at the royal feet, saying, 'Lord, whence have I merited from thee so great a favour? It would have been more than sufficient to have eaten with thy servants—but to eat at thy side and at thy own table! from the same dish and of the same food! Behold and see how utterly unworthy I am of such honours as these!' But the holy King, as

generous as he was compassionate, raised him to his arms, saying, 'Yes, at my table shalt thou sit, and with me shalt thou eat.'

Reflect to-day, when thou art invited, not by a king of this earth but by the Monarch of heaven to His table and to His dish, what should be the adornments in which thou shouldst approach, and with what festive garments thou shouldst be clothed. Endeavour, then, to hide the hideousness of sin with the decorations of grace.

THIRD POINT.—AFTER COMMUNION.

Miphiboseth sat at the royal table as low in humility as he was honoured, favoured by the King and admired by those belonging to the court; the grandees waited upon him, and the King himself handed to him the choicest of the viands. With how much gratification he partook of what came from the royal hand. How comforted with his new happiness, how satisfied with the feast set before him, for here indeed were joined once more honour and profit, the benignity of David rivalling the humility of Miphiboseth.

Consider, you who are communicating, that however great may have been the favours bestowed by the King of Israel on Miphiboseth, they never can equal those conferred on you to-day by the King of Heaven. There the King gave precious and dainty viands, but he did not give himself. Here, at this table of the Altar, you eat with God, and of God: His own Body He presents you with, and with it His Divinity, bestowing upon you all that He possesses

and Himself with all His gifts. Enjoy with delight this exquisite food, relish slowly; though partaking hungrily of this great gift, give place to contemplation, for He is truly God, and note that the very Angels assist around you, envying your happiness, yet jealously vigilant that you render to Him due reverence.

FOURTH POINT.—IN THANKSGIVING.

In grateful remembrance for so much kindness, Miphiboseth must have turned his timidity into outpourings of thankfulness and gratitude, proving the acknowledgment of the favour received by returning to obtain it again, not showing the delays of a lame man, but the punctuality of the invited guest. He did not behave as the son of David's greatest persecutor, but as the most faithful and grateful of vassals.

Consider what praises you should render to so great a King Who has thus favoured you; what thanks you should give a Lord Who has thus regaled you. Do not offend Him any longer as an enemy, but serve Him as a grateful son. Conclude, saying, 'O my Lord and my God! more merciful than David hast Thou shown Thyself in favouring me, and all Divine in pardoning me; for, being more covered with imperfections in my soul than Miphiboseth was in body, Thou hast deigned to admit me to Thy table, placing me by Thy side, and Thou hast fed me with Thy own Self. What thanks can I give Thee, O Lord, for so many favours? With the holy

King I will say, "Chalice for chalice, let one Communion be the recompense of another, repaying what has been received by receiving again; for with the Lord there is no other retribution: thus shall I return again and again to Thy table. It would more than have sufficed for me to have sat at the table of Thy hired labourers, but for Thy infinite goodness it was insufficient. Let the Angels praise Thee for me who have eaten for them, eating their bread. O Lord, grant me one more grace: namely, that, feeding upon Thee during all this temporal life, I may enjoy Thee for Eternity."

TWENTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

On the thanksgiving which the Beloved Disciple rendered his Divine Master, leaning on His bosom.

FIRST POINT.—BEFORE COMMUNION.

CONTEMPLATE this disciple of a pure heart, how he raises himself to the heart of his Master. He enjoys much who loveth much, and it is the property of virgin hearts to love most; for, denying themselves to all creatures, they give themselves up completely to God. John, being the beloved disciple of the Lover of Purity, disposes himself with virginal bosom to receive the spotless Lamb, striving to express in the most endearing terms his most pure love, and after having followed Him wheresoever He went, he casts himself on His bosom, and there reposes as in his centre, saying, ‘ My Beloved to me, and I to my Beloved, Who feedeth amongst the lilies’; and of all the favours of the Prince he aspired but to one, to enjoy interiorly and exteriorly Him Who was his beginning and his end, his God and his all.

Ponder, my soul! with what purity thou shouldst prepare thyself when thou comest to Communion, that by a mutual interchange the Lord may repose in

thy bosom and thou on His Breast. Awaken thy faith, that the Lord may sleep in thy charity; endeavour to dispose thyself with virgin heart, withdrawing thyself from every earthly affection, that with a pure conscience, washed clean of every spot, thou mayest love more, and enjoy more and more His Divine favours.

SECOND POINT.—AT THE TIME OF COMMUNION.

O powerful eagle! with what penetrating eye didst thou examine thyself in the rays of the dazzling Sun; nestling in Him so that thou both findest food and hast thy nest in His Bosom. Flying and soaring, thou comest to rest in Him after having gazed from end to end on this enamoured Sun, drinking in His rays of light under the appearances of His Precious Blood; then thou closest thine eyes in calm contemplation. Oh, how thou didst cast away all coldness of spirit by means of the heat of that burning Heart! Oh, how thou didst examine the designs of His favours and search into the intentions of His love! How leisurely thou enjoyest a love which is eternal, for when it seemed to be ended, then did it commence, for having loved, He loved to the end.

Soul! to the very same Bosom this same Lord invites you to-day when He gives you Himself as food. Approach, then, this day to communicate and to recline on His Breast, deriving through a similar love similar favours; and if John was the beloved one, be you the lover; show yourself to be an eagle in contemplation as well as in voracity;

attend upon Him with the eyes of faith, clasping Him with an inflamed charity.

THIRD POINT.—AFTER COMMUNION.

John, after having fed upon Christ freely, ventures to recline on Him, that interiorly and exteriorly he may be encompassed by his Master. O great disciple of love! and how faithfully did he inculcate His lessons! The Son of God reposes on the bosom of His Eternal Father, and John on that of the very Son of God, choosing that spot for reposing after his food. How profitably indeed must he have partaken who had eaten with such delight!

Soul! learn to sleep *in* God after having nourished thyself *with* God, calming thyself in contemplation, not allowing intrusive cares to disquiet thee, nor the world to debase thee, but persevering in the enjoyment of this thy paradise, demanding mercies from a God Who has evinced towards thee such attention; assist like an eagle in contemplating Him; attend on Him, slumbering, like John, with thine eyes closed to all creatures, and open for God alone.

FOURTH POINT.—IN THANKSGIVING.

So grateful did John remain for the Divine favour that had been granted to him, that he took it for his armorial designation, deriving from it his glorious title, ever after styling himself the beloved disciple who leaned on the breast of the Lord after the Supper; for John signifies grace, and the most grateful are ever the most favoured, and not only does he

never cast this grace in oblivion, but he perpetuates it gratefully through his own name, desiring to be so called in thankfulness, thereby signifying that he would sooner be left nameless than cease to be thankful, consecrating for all eternity his gratitude, and endeavouring to repay it by heaping love upon love.

Oh, you who have communicated, having followed the beloved disciple in receiving favours, do not leave him now alone in his gratefulness ; and if this most Divine Sacrament was good grace for you, because it is so entitled and is truly so, let your endeavour be to correspond to this good grace. Eucharist is its name, and gratitude should be the blazon on its standard. Draw from it the grace to return thanks for graces, fervour for favours, love for the manifestations of love, and services for so great a reward.

TWENTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

The banquet of King Assuerus.

FIRST POINT.—BEFORE COMMUNION.

CONSIDER how this mighty monarch, wishing to make a great display of his magnificence, resorts to the scheme of celebrating a sumptuous banquet, gaining affections with gifts, and forming friendships by feastings. He invited all the lords and grandees of his kingdom—for being a great banquet, the guests also must be great—and like royal princes they came robed in rich and costly garments, thus rivalling the favour by their jewels, and corresponding to such an honour by their adornments.

Reflect to what a far nobler banquet you are to-day invited, and how much superior is the Monarch Who gives it—not indeed to make ostentation of His greatness, but as a proof of His love. The one was a king of earth, this one is King of earth and of heaven, and so He invites the heavenly ones to come and serve those of the earth, that they may eat. There the great ones were called; here the little ones are chosen. There were the rich; here are the poor in spirit: there those also robed in fine

raiment; here those who are clothed with grace. Considering, therefore, the banquet to which you are called, the palace you are to enter, the table at which you are to sit, and the majesty of the Lord Who invites you, you will understand with what ornaments you should come bedecked, the reverence with which you are to approach, and the delight with which you are to eat.

SECOND POINT.—AT THE TIME OF COMMUNION.

The princes and great ones as soon as they arrived were conducted and seated in their places in the order of their dignity, not by anticipation, or according to age, but according to their merits. The principal ones were first, those nearest related by blood to the king being placed close to him. Each one was served from the dish that he preferred, and which most pleased him, and whatever they desired, however exquisite it might be, was placed before them, and in such a manner that they derived from it both honour and profit, to the equal gratification of their taste.

Reflect that in this sacramental banquet all these conditions are verified; here everyone who participates belongs to the blood, all being so allied to the King that they possess Him within them, each possessing a King in his body, and even a God—all receiving more than they ask and desire, and more even than they would know what to ask for, or what they knew would delight them—in each crumb a heaven. Approach, soul! and take thy seat and eat

in peace, thy mouth being thy measure, reflecting that the more thou dilatest it, the more will the Lord fill it. Take notice of what thou partakest, and thou wilt eat with ardour.

THIRD POINT.—AFTER COMMUNION.

The guests partook of the viands, enjoying their delicious flavour, and being princes and accustomed to good food, they knew how to estimate what was excellent; they ate much who were used to eating well, and being courtly, they praised the lord of the banquet for the bountifulness of his gifts, more particularly since he was a prince who prided himself on his liberality and even extravagance. The feast provided was as exquisite as it was well prepared, and so they gave way to their appetites, enjoying every delight and wasting nothing.

Consider that, however much that great and powerful King may have desired to give them, he never attained to giving his own self; that was left for this great God. Soul! this indeed is feasting, and this is truly to eat! Approach with an insatiable hunger to this Infinite Food; look well to what you are receiving, for it is called the bread of the understanding, and the food of the enlightened ones. Eat in the full light of day, and with a mouth accustomed to regal food, not degenerated back into the gross food of an earthly Egypt.

FOURTH POINT.—IN THANKSGIVING.

There is a sorrow that always follows every delight. All the banquets ended bitterly, and most so this one in the garden of Assuerus, for the Queen perished because she did not appear. The King commanded that she should crown its celebration with her beauty, but she ungratefully did not appreciate the favour, and unhappily being indignant with the King, she lost with this banquet her crown, and because she had refused to take her position by the King's side she was condemned to the perpetual loss of the greatest splendour, and to be cast into exterior darkness. At the very banquet table she was convicted, for there was the judge, and he who eats unworthily eats and drinks his own judgment.

Be warned, O my soul, from other mouths; assist at the banquet of the Altar with as much preparation as thou hast regard for its value. Remember that for thee is the feast prepared, and be not wanting on account of thy grossness, as others are on account of their boldness. Comprehend thy dignity and thy honour, for not only wilt thou sit by the side of the King, but the King Himself will abide in thy bosom. Come with fitting dispositions, returning with thankfulness, rendering Him infinite gratitude, and fearing lest thou mayest be cast away unhappily through being so thankless.

TWENTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

On adoring the Lord with the Three Kings, and offering
Him gifts.

FIRST POINT.—BEFORE COMMUNION.

FOLLOW to-day in contemplation, and with faith accompany three Kings of earth in their search for the King of Heaven—they were wise men, wisdom being a sovereign disposition for finding Infinite Wisdom. From the east—the commencement of the world, the beginning of life—they came, guided by a star, seeking the sun. They left the great city of Jerusalem, where everything was in confusion, to find the Lord in the tranquillity of Bethlehem; they descended from their grandeur, accommodating themselves to its lowliness, their first steps being to lower their heads to the ground, and so reach that heaven which was at its foot. They entered in, where everything was open, to find a new-born Babe, and a great God, undistinguished either here in its smallness, or above in its immensity. They approached Him, in the arms of the Aurora, and in the midst of tears and pearls; they paid homage to Him as their Monarch, adoring Him as their God, offering their hearts in the centre of their gifts.

Oh you who to-day are to receive Him in Holy Communion, reflect that you are sallying forth in search of this same King! Oh, that you may be guided by the star of your felicity, the light of His Divine grace, to find Him if you are wise, not with the wisdom of this age, but disillusioned, come from the orient of your life, and marching on diligently in the paths of perfection!

SECOND POINT.—AT THE TIME OF COMMUNION.

The star which guided the three Kings also undeceived them, introducing them, not into a lofty palace, but into an humble porch, which they entered not only with their breasts on the ground, but with their mouths saluting it as the throne of His feet—not in order to admire rich tapestries of silk and gold, but cobwebs woven by spiders, and in place of brocaded embellishments they found a stable carpeted with straw. There, in the midst of beasts, lay Infinite Wisdom, and a crib made for animals was changed into a sublime throne of seraphs. Casting themselves at His Feet, they formed with their crowns His seat, making the loftiness of their spirit rival the humiliation of their love. They both wept and laughed, effects of the sight of that Infant Sun, and amidst the most abject poverty in the world they recognised and acknowledged all the fulness and richness of heaven.

Soul! To-day the star of your felicity guides you, not to a stable, but to an altar, where your three powers await the same Child-God Who gave audience to the Kings. It does not cost you so many

steps to find Him as it did them, for you have Him near you, and not only does He permit you to adore Him, but actually to feed on Him. If the Kings considered it a great favour to be allowed to kiss the earth of the stable—*terram lingent*—to you is conceded to feast on His Humanity, and to nourish yourself with His Divinity. They sought His Feet to kiss them; you to take them into your mouth. They were allowed to clasp Him in their arms, embracing Him; you to receive Him into your very heart. Appreciate, then, your happiness, and derive therefrom abundant profit.

THIRD POINT.—AFTER COMMUNION.

The Kings opened and displayed their treasures to their infant God. After having first offered to Him their souls, they presented Him with the brilliancy of gold and the bitterness of myrrh, thus predicting as faithful astrologers the dolours of His Passion. Having adored Him as God, they desired to fondle Him as a child. The Virgin Mother permitted them and the rustic shepherds to do so. Each in turn they would take Him up, caressing Him, desiring to possess Him, and in homage folding in their purple robes Him Whom others would clothe in garments of ignominy. They never tired of imprinting their kisses on those cheeks which, later on, His enemies would redden with their cruel blows, and they who had come in such haste now enjoyed leisurely and quietly their felicity, not finding their way to return, it being necessary that the Divine oracle should show it to them in their waking dreams.

Soul! prostrate thyself after having communicated at the feet of this Child-God, presenting Him thy three powers, with the incense of contemplation, the gold of thy affections, and the myrrh in memory of His sufferings. Offer Him a lively faith, a brave hope, and a burning charity. Give Him the incense of obedience, the gold of poverty, and the myrrh of chastity. Honour thy God by prayer, assist thy neighbour with almsdeed, and curb thy own self with mortification.

FOURTH POINT.—IN THANKSGIVING.

The wise men proved themselves liberal of their gifts, and no less so in their gratefulness and praises of the Lord; they proceeded in every way as befitted Kings, for that which rendered them dumb about informing Herod made them eloquent in their praises, blessing the Lord, publishing in all their lands the wonders of the King Whom they had found, for undoubtedly the lips that had pressed those tender Feet could never more be closed to the Divine praises, but for ever rendered Him their grateful homage.

Oh, you who have communicated, act in a kingly manner, not as a low being; prove yourself wise by being grateful and thankful, returning praises for His favours, over and over again letting this food of Heaven repose amidst the slumbers of contemplation. Return by another road to a new life, loaded with virtues in exchange for your offerings, marching on to the orient of fervour, and not to the occident of tepidity!

TWENTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

Comparing the greatness of the Lord with the vileness of man.

FIRST POINT.—BEFORE COMMUNION.

Oh, my great God and my Lord, my spirit faints within me, when I see that Thou, an Infinite God, crowned with infinite perfection, shouldst deign to enter into the breast of so vile and insignificant a worm as I am. That Thou so immense, and Who canst not be contained within the heavens or on the earth, shouldst narrow Thyself within the bosom of a despicable worm. Thou, all powerful, and Who couldst create other infinite worlds, full of countless perfect beings, yet willest to come and enter the smallness of this vile creature who can do nothing and is worth nothing; Thou, Infinite Wisdom, Who knowest all things and comprehendest everything—the past, the present, and the future—how is it possible that Thou shouldst lower thyself to one who is ignorance itself? Thou Who art eternal and unfailing, Who wast before all ages, and art, and ever shalt be, yet comest to me, who in an instant disappear and am no more; Thou, Lord, infinitely good and holy, wishest to dwell within the bosom of such an unworthy sinner. Thou the highest grandeur, I lowliness itself;

Thou all, I nothingness! If the pillars of heaven tremble before Thy Divine Presence, how much more my heart should tremble and fear. Lord! strengthen Thou my lowliness, comfort my littleness, that I may not faint away on receiving Thee.

SECOND POINT. —AT THE TIME OF COMMUNION.

My God and my Lord! if the Baptist considered himself unworthy to loosen the latchet of Thy shoe, how shall I approach, not only to touch Thy latchet, but to touch Thee, to feed on Thee, and to place Thee within my bosom! What would the Baptist say if he were to receive Thee, my Lord, and place Thee into his breast? If John, sanctified as he was from his mother's womb, confirmed in grace, brought up in the roughness of a desert, the day-star of the Sun, and Thy precursor, deemed himself unworthy to touch the tie of Thy shoe, I, born and reared in sins, I, full of faults and miseries, I, so great a sinner, how shall I dare to receive Thee? If John, after so much penance, and so sinless as he was, shrinks, what am I to do, with so many sins and no penitence? But hark! I hear that same Baptist speaking to me and saying, 'Behold the Lamb of God! approach to Him, for if He is infinite in His greatness, He is also infinite in His mercy. If He is an immense God, He is also a gentle Lamb; if thou art covered with sins, He is the one Who taketh away sin.' Cleanse me, then, my Lord, more and more; create in me a clean heart; renew a right spirit within my bowels, that Thou mayest lodge within me.

THIRD POINT.—AFTER COMMUNION.

‘Who art Thou, Lord, and who am I?’ said the humble Saint Francis, and the same words shall I repeat many times. If the holy patriarch Abraham shrank within himself when he had to speak to Thee, exclaiming that he was but dust and ashes, how am I to come to Thee, not only to stand before Thee, but to place Thee within my breast? If the Seraphim who surround Thy throne, burning as they do with the fire of love, veil their faces with their wings, abashed in presence of Thy sovereign Majesty, how can I, so cold and slothful in Thy service, dare to come and receive Thee into my bosom? ‘Is it possible?’ I will exclaim with Solomon—‘is it to be imagined that God Himself should really and truly live within me; for if the Heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee, how much less this lowly dwelling wherein to-day Thou deignest to dwell?’ But, Lord, listen to my petitions, not to my demerits; accept my humiliations in lieu of my vileness, and let the very acknowledgment of them be my extenuation.

FOURTH POINT.—IN THANKSGIVING.

O my Lord and my God! where was I when the stars of the morning praised Thee? If that bright constellation John so revered Thee in Thy presence and so lauded Thee when absent, for so many favours received, what shall I say after so many and continued favours? I would wish to-day to sing a new canticle, for Thou hast performed in

me a wonder of wonders ; and if Thou madest a memorial of them in this most Divine Sacrament, I also shall make a memorial of eternal praises. Oh that one of Thy Seraphim would fly to purify my lips before I receive Thee, and afterwards adequately bless and praise Thee for me ! But I will sing for all eternity Thy infinite mercies, and though I feel myself vile and low, I would not wish to be ungracious, and that Immensity which thou hast narrowed by coming to me, I would wish to enlarge and magnify by extolling Thee, returning thanks to Him Who has crowned me unceasingly with numberless mercies.

TWENTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

The Great Supper applied to the Sacred Communion.

FIRST POINT.—BEFORE COMMUNION.

CONSIDER how in this great Lord His goodness is elevated by His greatness, as if there was a rivalry between the Infinite Good and Its desire of communicating Itself to others, the love of the Father equalling the power of the King; nor does He reserve to Himself alone the enjoyment of His infinite riches, but offers them to everyone, inviting all to His treasures, and even beseeching them to accept them. He sends His diligent servants to go, as if on wings, and seek the slothful guests; but like coarse and low beings as they were, and worldly, they despised the honour offered, spurning its benefits and wasting its fruits; and being ignorant, they excused themselves for not coming. Oh more than hapless ones! for, being accustomed to the vile food of their Egypt they loathed the delights of Heaven. Some were deterred from coming by the golden manacles of their cupidity, others by the ties of sensuality, many by their ambition for honours, which are the concupiscence of the worldly, in such sort, that when everything was prepared and ready, the guests alone were

wanting. Oh, who could have believed it? But the banquet was of Heaven and they were of the world worldly, and in proportion as the Lord showed Himself amiable so much the more did the guests prove themselves worthless and mean.

Remember, my soul, how many times you have committed this grievous offence, for the King of Heaven, having invited you to His table, you have, by not recognising the favour, spurned the happiness, and in place of preparing yourself to go and receive Him in the Holy Communion, you gave in to a frivolous tepidity, to a vain amusement. Draw from this consideration an earnest resolution of amendment, and an efficacious desire of frequenting this sumptuous banquet.

SECOND POINT.—AT THE TIME OF COMMUNION.

When the King saw that the guests had no wish to accept His invitation, they having such bad taste, that on being besought to come for their own good, they despised the offer, nevertheless He was not for that reason displeased with the rest, nor did He entertain the thought of withdrawing His benefits, rather His desire of imparting them increased, and He gave new orders, and sent His ministers to the highways and lanes, and to bring in all the poor. Since the rich had declined to come, let the hungry ones be invited, because for them the Great Supper will be arranged, and let it be the greatest punishment of the worldly ones not to taste or even see it.

These poor ones came as quickly as they were invited, the lame coming with diligence, the blind groping to the centre of attraction ; they all entered the banquet hall with humility, and were received with kindness and courtesy. The table was filled with the poor in spirit, despised by the world, but esteemed by Heaven, for their portion is to reign with God.

My soul, consider yourself the poorest amongst them all, ever lame in virtue, maimed for doing good. Make yourself a companion of the Angels, working your way with them into Heaven. Do not wait to be sought for, but approach humbly, and you will be well entertained, remembering that to hunger is a great disposition for receiving so great a food.

THIRD POINT.—AFTER COMMUNION.

With what delight must these poor mendicants have sat at this well-covered table. The poor are regaled with the food of the princes ; how they must have relished it, free from the loathing of those who are surfeited, and without fear of eating to excess, losing nothing, not even time, their whole thoughts bent upon the repast, for they know that this is supper, and no other meal is to follow. They despise nothing, their hunger and the deliciousness of the viands not permitting them to feel any want ; they eat with profit who eat with such zest, and they remain perfectly satisfied, they who until that day had partaken of nothing substantial.

Imagine yourself the most miserable of all these ;

approach hungrily to this sacramental table, and you will eat with delight; for however sumptuous might have been that great supper, it was but a shadow of yours. Eat like a mendicant, relishing slowly this delicious food; eat with faith, pondering over It in meditation, and you will find that in all your lifetime you had not until to-day relished anything so dainty or so substantial.

FOURTH POINT.—IN THANKSGIVING.

How happy and well-satisfied must they have remained, no longer poor, but rich guests, for He enriches you who serves you! How their gratitude must have equalled their hunger! How many times must they have thanked the Lord for the Banquet, those who until that day had never been satisfied! How they must have congratulated each other on their happiness as compared with the inferior condition of their neighbours! and how they must have acknowledged and celebrated it with jubilation!

Soul! appreciate your happiness, lift up your voice with that of the Queen of the Heavens, magnify the Lord, saying, 'He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He hath sent empty away.' Show yourself as grateful as you have been honoured; ask of the Angels to lend you their tongues, to praise and thank the Lord, desirous to approach to communicate, like one of those poor who were entertained at this great supper.

THIRTIETH MEDITATION.

On receiving the Lord as a treasure hidden in the Sacrament.

FIRST POINT.—BEFORE COMMUNION.

CONSIDER how a wealthy man acts when he becomes aware of the existence of some great hidden treasure. How quickly does he credit the news! how diligently he seeks it! not lying down to sleep, for his dreams are but of enriching himself; he neither eats nor drinks, being like a dropsical man in his thirst for gold. His first act is to purchase the field wherein the treasure is hidden, and to make certain of it by securing its possession. He digs it himself, for he trusts no one. The hope of finding it beguiles his fatigue; he does not feel weary, for he is filled with cupidity; his desires growing within him in proportion as he approaches his treasures, the covetousness of his heart giving strength to his weary arms.

Soul! to-day Faith notifies to you that a treasure is hidden in a field of bread, and so precious, that in it are contained all the riches of heaven. You are poor, but if you find it you will return rich. Endeavour to obtain this treasure and you will to-day quit your miseries, for here in this Host you have

all the eternal treasures. Why, then, do you not seek It diligently? why do you not joyously obtain It? Quite at hand have you this treasure—enjoy It abundantly. Approach the Sacred Communion with the avidity of a man covetous of obtaining a great treasure.

SECOND POINT.—AT THE TIME OF COMMUNION.

Paul called the riches of this world offal, and justly so, for in dust they all end, and being corruptible, they leave their foolish lovers mocked—soiling the heart with vices. It would be madness, and very great madness, to load your bosom with clay if it were in your power to cover and weigh it down with rich jewels—to carry a burthen of earth when you could have one of gold. Thus act the children of this generation; bastards as to all that is eternal, they despise the treasure of the Altar, honouring the dust of the world.

Oh! do not be so senseless and of such a low mind as to lose a treasure in each Communion for a sordid interest, for a filthy pleasure, for a senseless act of slothfulness, but approach with eagerness, and you will return with happiness.

THIRD POINT.—AFTER COMMUNION.

How delighted is the man who finds the hidden treasure, and more so if in him cupidity and poverty predominate! How eagerly does he set about its discovery! With what pleasure he enjoys it; gazing upon it, scarcely believing what he sees, and not

trusting to the testimony of his eyes, he satisfies himself by touching it with his hands. He employs all his senses and faculties without diverting his thoughts for a single instant on any other object, losing nothing, filling his bosom to the utmost. The burthen is his comfort, and his sorrow is that it weighs no heavier. He returns over and over again from his house to the field without resting, so long as there may remain anything to be carried away, emptying his bosom and filling every coffer, returning to load himself many times, seeking more and more, seeking over again where he had already sought, for he is laying in a treasure indeed, and one to last him all his life.

Soul! you who found this most precious rich treasure, as hidden as it is sacramental, in the pasture of the Altar, with what love should you return to obtain It, with what attention uncover It, with what eagerness receive It, with what delight enjoy It! But, alas! you know not the wealth you possess, you do not know what is its value, or how much it concerns you. Pass and re-pass the road in frequent and devout Communions, and you will be enriched; come and finish to divest yourself of your tepidity, that enemy of wealth, for you must needs amass much for yourself, so as to last you for all your life, and that an eternal one, in peace and in happiness.

FOURTH POINT.—IN THANKSGIVING.

How joyfully does he who found the treasure estimate his happiness! Each day does he renew the remembrance of his felicity, ever keeping present to his mind that first joy, valuing during the whole of his life that moment when he came out of his misery, consecrating eternally that happy day, marking it with a jewel, and that a precious one. How grateful is he to the one who gave him the news, and though he may not give him of his riches, he renders him abundant thanks, recounting many times his felicity to his intimate friends, and congratulating himself with them on his good fortune.

O my soul! if you comprehended your bliss, how you would appreciate it! If you attained to understand the infinite excellence of this hidden manna, which is manna to the taste, and purest bliss in its fortunate discovery, what thanks would you render the Lord! Repeat its memory each moment; frequent it every day. Remember that it is an infinite treasure which never fails, but each day you will find it whole, and ever the same. Prove yourself grateful to the Lord, Who reserved it for you; take care you do not lose it through ingratitude, nor rate it low through underestimating its worth; live on it all your life, which will be to live to God for all eternity. Amen.

THIRTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

On approaching the Holy Communion with the fervour of the two blind men whom our Lord enlightened.

FIRST POINT.—BEFORE COMMUNION.

CONSIDER this fervent blind man of Jericho, who, to obtain the sight of his corporeal eyes, arms and arrays himself with the light of faith. He sallies out seeking the Saviour, undeterred by the fear of any obstacles he may meet, and unrestrained by slothful excuses of impossibility. He sees that he does not see, and sees that which it concerns him to see, and therefore quits his house, first leaving himself. He has no lack of tongue for crying out, though he may lack sight to see ; and he who has tongue for confessing his evils will obtain their remedies. He couples the omnipotence of Jesus with His mercy, and thus calls upon Him, insisting on His ever-healing Name. ‘ Jesus,’ he says, ‘ Son of David the meek, Thou wilt not be otherwise than merciful. Jesus, Son of David, to whom was promised the Saviour, give me health. Lord, be merciful to me ! Thou art an Infinite God, and I am a miserable creature. Thou art my Creator, Thou must also be my Helper. Thou, Who hast granted me that

greater gift, my being, grant me the lesser one, my sight; be not in my regard a hidden God, Thou Who art so known in Judea.' In this manner he diligently sought his cure with loud cries of prayer.

Imagine yourself blinded by your passions without seeing what most concerns you, without knowing your God and your Lord. Great is the blindness of your ignorance, greater that of your sins, for behold and see, blinded soul, that here you have that same Jesus and Saviour—if not in Jericho, at the altar. Cry loudly if you desire to see, pray if you wish for health, and obtain so great a favour, for he who has the tongue for asking pardon will assuredly reach heaven. Run, guided by faith, call on Him no longer as the Son of David, but what is better, 'Jesus, Son of Mary, be merciful to me!'

SECOND POINT.—AT THE TIME OF COMMUNION.

The Saviour, drawing nigh, approached the blind man—a great happiness indeed is it to be near the Lord—and though he could not see Him with the eyes of his body, he perceived Him with the eyes of his soul. He, availing himself of his voice, who could not make use of his eyes, strengthened it with the voice of his fervour, breaking forth with the cry of hope. 'Jesus,' he exclaimed, which was to say, 'Fountain of health and of life! let there be one drop for me; for if Thou, Lord, art not my remedy, who shall suffice? I will not be so accursed as to confide in mortal man, for creatures do not give sight, rather they destroy it!' Those who went

before him, angry with his cries, rebuked him ; not feeling his miseries, they bade him hold his peace. But Jesus listened to him, and he cried out much more : ‘ Lord, have mercy on my misery ; if I cannot see Thee, Thou canst look on me.’ ‘ What wilt thou ?’ asked Christ, that the blind man might be more sensible of his necessity and its remedy ; but he answered : ‘ What can I wish for except to look on Thee, for in Thee I shall see everything, my God and my every good !’

Listen, soul ! To-day that same Lord speaks to thee, asking thee : ‘ What wilt thou ?’ Beseech mercies of One Who invites you with His Body and Blood, for what will He not bestow Who gives all ? ‘ I am your Goal, fix on Me your gaze ; I am your Centre, repose in Me.’ ‘ What wilt Thou ?’ demands the Lord ; and do you answer Him thus : ‘ What can I desire but Thee Thyself, to see Thee and enjoy Thee, to receive Thee and be received by Thee ? Close my eyes to vanity, opening them alone to Thee, Who art my Centre.’ ‘ What wilt thou ?’ which is equal to saying, ‘ Dost thou know what it is to communicate ?’ ‘ *Discite quid fecerim vobis.*’

THIRD POINT.—AFTER COMMUNION.

The Lord showed Himself no less merciful with the man who was blind from his birth, but He acted more mysteriously ; for although able to cure him with merely one word, He took clay and spread it upon his eyes, making a salve of what would seem to be an obstruction, mixing it with His spittle, with

which He turned it into a clod of Heaven, forming out of what had been an ill a remedy, desiring that from the dust of His humility should come the clay which would effect the cure, opening the man's eyes when He seemed to be obstructing them most. With this paste, and by washing them afterwards, the blind person obtained so good a sight that he was able to see all he could desire.

Reflect, now, on the advantages of His favours in your regard. He does not apply clay mixed with spittle, but His own Body mixed with His Blood, and full of His Divinity. Lay Him, then, not only over your eyes, but within your bosom; place Him on the eyes of your soul with knowledge and love, acknowledging that to grant you your sight He gives you His own very eyes. Look, now, with and through the eyes of Christ, speak with His tongue, walk with His feet, live in His life, saying with St. Paul, 'I live now, not I, but Christ liveth in me.' He it is Who sees and Who speaks in me. Reflect, that if the spittle of the Lord worked so efficaciously that it gave sight to the blind man, what will not be effected in a being who feeds on the Body and Blood of the Lord, united with His Divinity?

FOURTH POINT.—IN THANKSGIVING.

So rejoiced was the blind man at having received his sight, that he gave great bounds of joy, running to the Eternal Crown. He returned to the Lord in gratitude for so great a mercy, and looked on Him, which was to gaze on all that has to be seen, employ-

ing his tongue in giving praises, confessing Him to be his God and his Lord, in spite of those blind men who were blinded through envy. He prostrated himself on the ground, glorifying his Redeemer ; he fell on his knees on that very earth which had been laid on his eyes, adoring his Creator and lauding his Physician ; and as often as he would open his eyes to see, so often would he open his mouth in thanksgiving for the favour he had received.

Oh, with how much greater reason should you, my soul, render thanks to the Lord for so Divine a favour ! Ever have your sight fixed on the Lord, that He may free your feet from the ties of Satan ; and as you have the eyes of faith to see and know your God and Lord in that Host, let your endeavour be to become all tongue, so as to celebrate and glorify Him for all eternity. Amen.

THIRTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

On receiving our blessed Lord in the manner in which He was welcomed in Zachary's house.

FIRST POINT.—BEFORE COMMUNION.

CONTEMPLATE to-day the humility of Mary, the devotion of Elizabeth, the astonishment of Zachary, the joy of John, and the mercies of the Child-God.

Consider how unprepared must Elizabeth have judged her house to be for receiving the King of Heaven Who entered into it. Incredulous was Zachary of the favour, and dumb to proclaim it. The maternal enclosure of the infant John would have little availed to hold him, had he not been held in the prison of sin. Elizabeth, rendered helpless from her advanced age and from being great with child, was prevented offering due homage; and seeing this, she resorts to the expedient of timidity, shrinking into her humility, knowing that to be the greatest preparation for receiving such great guests, and in this way she supplied, by humiliations, the deficiency of preparation.

Ponder, you who are to communicate, how to-day that same King and Lord comes to visit your house. If, then, He was hidden in the Virginal womb, here

He is concealed in a Host ; if there under the veils of purity, here under the accidents of bread. Reflect, how unprepared He finds you, and how deficient in all the virtues with which this Lord wishes to be surrounded. Take the expedient of humility, be filled with astonishment that the Lord Who occupies the heavens should desire to be housed in your breast ; shrink within yourself with far greater reason than Saint Elizabeth, and provide by humility for your lack of devotion.

SECOND POINT.—AT THE TIME OF COMMUNION.

‘Whence is this to me,’ cried Saint Elizabeth, though a cousin of Mary and a Saint, ‘that the Mother of my Lord should come to me ? When did I merit such happiness, I less than a slave, she the Queen of the Heavens ?’ Great word this of Saint Elizabeth, worthy example to those who communicate, ‘Whence is this to me ?’ With these words should you commence, O my soul, when you welcome so high a Lord, repeating them many times. Whence to me, a vile worm, a miserable sinner, a deserfer of hell—to me full of sins, ungrateful, base, and unthankful, to me, a worm of the earth, to me, dust and ashes, to me, nothingness, and even less than nothing ? And that the very God Himself should come, that Infinite, immense and eternal Lord, not only to my house, but into my breast ; that He should enter not only within my doors, but within my lips ; that He should penetrate not only into the most hidden retreat, but reach my

heart? How is it that I am not confounded? how do I not faint away? Without doubt I am truly insensible.

THIRD POINT.—AFTER COMMUNION.

Ponder on Saint Elizabeth's manner of welcoming her guest Mary, and how the infant John pays homage to the Child-God, in this house everything being in harmony, and no one slothful. The instant John feels himself freed from original sin he leaps in his eagerness to approach the Lord, as though he would say: 'Oh! come to me, my God and my Lord! Oh! do what is requisite that I may be able to approach Thee.' How he would have embraced Him, pressing Him closely, and have followed Him if he had been able! His will was at once made manifest, for when Saint Elizabeth heard the voice of that purest ewe lamb, John acknowledged the Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world, by bounding with leaps of delight, for there is no joy like that of being freed from sin.

Reflect, you who have received the Lord, that if John could not be contained in his mother's womb, through joy at feeling that his father's house held the Infinite God, what bounds of joy should you not give in the paths of virtue, reaching even to life eternal, you who to-day have received Him within your very breast! If John was so gladdened at feeling himself near to Him, how much should you be consoled, you who possess Him within yourself! But, alas! you neither feel nor know Him. There the Lord remained in the womb of His most holy

Mother, here He passes into your bosom. John could not at once approach the Lord, though he made great efforts, and you approach so near to Him that you unite yourself sacramentally to Him. Saint John desired to imprint his lips on the feet of that Lord the latchet of whose shoes he later on felt unworthy to loosen, and you receive Him with your lips, putting Him into your mouth, to eat and swallow Him; endeavour, therefore, to live in Him, with Him, and for Him.

FOURTH POINT.—IN THANKSGIVING.

Everyone remained full of joy and gratitude, Elizabeth testifying both to her humility and the favour which filled her with the Holy Spirit, and to His mercies, exclaiming aloud as she returned thanks. The infant John no less rejoiced, for though he could not cry out, he made himself felt by his leaps—he who was to be the voice of the Lord, and ever afterwards employed himself in His Divine praises. The Virgin Mother sang, lifting up her voice, magnifying the Lord, the Worker of mercies and of wonders.

Soul, be not struck dumb in the midst of so many voices of praise; be yours the voice of exaltation with John, not the dumb silence of Zachary. Open your mouth in thanksgiving, for you have received the Holy Eucharist. Do not be silent like those who dwell in the solitude of the mountains, but be like one who belongs to the celestial court, full of gratitude and praise. Lift up your voice with Elizabeth, leap with John and exalt Him with Mary most holy!

THIRTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

On no room being found in Bethlehem to receive the Child-God
—applied to the Holy Communion.

FIRST POINT.—BEFORE COMMUNION.

CONSIDER the bad dispositions of the inhabitants of Bethlehem : they received not into their houses One Whom they should have welcomed into their inmost hearts. Pride and cupidity had taken complete possession of them, and therefore no room was left for such a poor humble guest. They offered not even a corner to Him to Whom they should have offered their whole hearts. His kinsmen, blinded to their own interest, saw not the good that was coming in at their doors, for those who see not their God in the person of the poor, know not their God made poor.

Listen, my soul ! for to-day that same Lord comes to knock at the door of your house ; if then He was hidden in the virginal enclosure, here He is enclosed in this Host. Disengage, then, your heart of everything that is of the world, and make room for all Heaven, for a heaven of heavens should be the bosom wherein this Infinite Child is to be housed. Endeavour, then, to adorn it with humility and with

poverty of spirit, for these are the jewels which are so prized by this mighty Guest Whom you are expecting.

SECOND POINT.—AT THE TIME OF COMMUNION.

The pilgrims of Heaven seek a corner of the world to shelter them and do not find it ; they are unknown because those around them are ungrateful, nor do they deign even to look at or listen to them. Behold, here no room is to be found in the world to hold Him for Whom even the heavens are too narrow, and yet vile worms, for whom there is no place in Heaven, find the world too little for themselves. Contemplate the Virgin going from door to door, and finding them all closed, when so wide open are flung the portals of Heaven. She passes from the door of a relation to that of an acquaintance, all pretending that they knew them not, asking, 'Who art thou?' The Virgin would reply that she was a poor pilgrim, espoused to a poor carpenter ; and on hearing of so much poverty, they would shut the doors in their faces. Speak not thus, dear Lady, for the world comprehends not this language ; say that thou art the Princess of the earth, the Queen of Heaven, the Empress of all creation.

But, O my soul ! those glorious titles abide at your door, for behold to-day this same Lady comes knocking to ask you for shelter, for room wherein the Child-God may be born. Be careful what you answer her, for often have you denied her entrance, with more rudeness than the people of Bethlehem,

forasmuch as you have more faith. Enkindle your faith, then, and consider that the same Child-God Who then went seeking wherein to be born here seeks those who will receive Him ; there He was enveloped in virginal veils, here in pure white accidents. At the doors of the heart He calls, and there is no one to answer Him, He finds no one to receive Him, the beloved of the Eternal Father, the desired of the Angels ! Come, my soul, arise from the couch of your tepidity, quit your worldly delights ; arise, do not become slothful, else He will pass on to a more blessed abode.

THIRD POINT.—AFTER COMMUNION.

The Incarnate Word had no place wherein to be born. Oh, how the Angels would have sheltered Him in the midst of their winged hierarchy ! But that happiness is conceded to none ; it is reserved for you alone. Oh, you who attain to communicate, offer this Sacramental Child your bosom for an abode ; tear open your interior, and let the surroundings of your heart be Its swaddling clothes ! Tired out and feeling slighted, the Mother and her unborn Child retire to a stable, which the Lord made His abode, on account of its poverty and humility. Here they are received by the beasts with humanity whom men had turned away so cruelly. The Mother laid Him in a manger, alternating it with her lap. Amid the straw she lays that finest of wheat, and invites everyone to come to the House of Bread,* that all may eat.

* Bethlehem signifies ' House of Bread.'

Soul! be not more insensible than the brutes; the ox acknowledges its King, do you know your Master? Gaze on Him with a lively faith, and you will find that the same Infant Who was laid in the manger really and truly is here on the altar; and that, however much you might there have approached to embrace and fondle Him, here you actually feed upon Him! There you might press Him to your bosom, here you put Him inside it. Allow Him, then, to be born in your heart, and let all your powers serve Him, some loving, some contemplating Him, but one and all adoring and serving Him.

FOURTH POINT.—IN THANKSGIVING.

There was found on earth no one to receive the Child-God, and when He was born there was no one to offer Him homage. It was necessary that the attendants of the court of Heaven should come down and proclaim glory to God and congratulate men of goodwill, announcing to them their happiness.

Soul! to-day Heaven itself has been transported into your breast, the Eternal Word from the bosom of the Father into your interior; from the lap of His Mother He has come into your heart. How is it that you do not become all tongue to sing His praises, and that you do not melt away into tears of tenderness? It is unbecoming that a mouth which has tasted such food should remain closed; lips that have been bathed with the tears of an Infant God, how is it that they remain so parched? Beg

of the Angels to lend you their tongues, in order that you may imitate their praises. Pray, sing, cry out loudly, saying, 'Be all the glory for God, and for me the fruit of peace together with a good and devout will.' Amen.

THIRTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

On receiving the most Blessed Sacrament as a grain of wheat sown in your heart.

FIRST POINT.—BEFORE COMMUNION.

CONSIDER that the celestial Husbandman is not only pleased to sow His Divine Word in the hearts of the faithful, but also desires to sow the Sacramental grain in their interior. It is usual with the careful labourer, before he consigns the fertile seed to the fruitful bosom of the earth, to dig and cultivate the ground much, rooting up all the noxious weeds, that they may not encumber it, burning the thorns, that it may not be choked by them, removing the stones, so that it may not be buried under them, for many obstacles occur before it commences to grow, and many after it springs up.

Reflect, that to-day, for thy great happiness, the most fecund of grains and the richest seed of Heaven is to be sown in the lowly earth of thy breast, and in the pasture-field of thy heart. Endeavour, then, to prepare and till the ground before thou receivest it. Water it with tears to soften it; pluck up its vices by the very roots, that they may not encumber it; consume the thorns of cupidity, that it may not

be choked by them ; remove all troublesome cares, that they may not hinder it ; take up the stones of thy hardness and coldness, that it may not be buried under them. In this manner, having thy interior well disposed and perfectly disengaged, thou mayest receive this generous grain, which by grace is to fructify, and which is to nourish thee with eternal life.

SECOND POINT.—AT THE TIME OF COMMUNION.

Having thus prepared the soil, the diligent sower, rising early, goes into his field, and with liberal hands strews the finest grain from his granaries ; the earth, receiving it in its soft bosom, enwraps and gives it life. The rain bestows moisture, the sun heat, the air breath. The fertile grain soon commences to give signs of life by coming up to the light, the virtue which it encloses swelling the germ, extending itself at the same time downwards towards a good depth, by spreading its roots with which to support itself, and also soaring high, that it may glory in luxuriant verdure.

Reflect, that to-day the diligent Cultivator of your soul transports from the Divine bosom into your ground the most supersubstantial grain, the delight of heaven itself. Into your breast has it fallen ; encircle it with fervour, water it with tenderness, swell it with devotion, animate it with a lively faith, cover it with your hope, guard it with an ardent charity, that, taking deep root in your interior through humility, it may grow up luxuriantly in your soul, and be crowned with the fruits of glory.

THIRD POINT.—AFTER COMMUNION.

Greatly to be admired is the gentle firmness with which the grain of wheat, taking hold of the earth, penetrates its depths, breaking through the crust, throwing aside the clay, that it may not become soiled by it, and fills the surrounding air with its vigorous life. Overcoming all the difficulties which contend against it—the hoar-frost which would blight it, the snows which would cover it, the ice which would deaden it, the winds which would tear it—and triumphing over every obstacle, it rises, grows, and stands prominently forth. Then does it change the green of its emerald luxuriance for the russet colour of the ears which it crowns with gold, the beards forming the points. How lovely does the harvest look! at one time fair by its verdure, and later on by its gold tints, cheering the eyes of the beholders, and more so of the owners who are to reap it.

Reflect, that if all this is worked by a little material grain of wheat in a little earth, what will not the grain of Sacramental Wheat work in the bosom of him who worthily receives It? Give It room, that It may take firm root in your interior and grow through your powers, swelling in your heart, animated by your will, and crowning your spirit with the fruits of grace. Oh, how beautiful looks the field of your heart, teeming with the rich harvest of so many and such fervent Communion! What a lovely sight for the Angels, and how pleasing to your great Owner, Who is God! Run in contemplation to see it, and with great joy enjoy it; fill your soul with garlands of virtue and crowns of glory.

FOURTH POINT.—IN THANKSGIVING.

With what delight do the reapers take hold of the sickles! how full of gladness do they use them! And those who in sorrow had sallied out to strew the seed now reap with joy; they sowed in the cold, and now reap in the heat, proclaiming with loud cries their delight. But, alas! like noisy churls, they are more grasping than thankful to the Giver, spending in profanity the time which ought to have been employed in the Divine praises.

Soul, you who to-day comprehend the fruits of that celestial seed, multiplied a hundredfold for each grain, do not imitate the reapers in their ingratitude, but in their joy. Lift up your voice in the Divine praises, dedicate the songs of exultation on account of graces, to the exalting of His glory. Make the cymbal and psaltery resound with the tones of love, and with loud voices correspond to an infinite liberality by an eternal gratitude, repaying the debts of special graces by glorifying Him with tributes of eternal worship. Amen.

THIRTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

Receiving the Child-Jesus banished to the Egypt of your heart.

FIRST POINT. — BEFORE COMMUNION.

CONSIDER how badly this earth accords with the King of Heaven. The foxes have their burrows and the birds of the air their nests, but the Lord finds no place wherein He can rest, for the son of death and of sin persecutes the Author of grace and of life. How quickly is He made to leave the city of flowers Who was born for thorns! In His Mother's arms He journeys towards Egypt, the region of plagues and of darkness. But how inhumanly those Egyptians disown Him, and with what rudeness do they receive Him, shutting their doors upon the good which was coming to them!

Soul, to-day the same Child-God is proceeding to the Egypt of your heart. If there He was wrapped in swaddling clothes, here He is enveloped in the accidents of bread. It is not terror which brings Him, but love; He flies not from the sons of men, but seeks them, placing His delight in being with them. Do not receive Him like a boorish Egyptian, but like a courtier of heaven; and if your heart be an Egypt,

covered with the darkness of ignorance, full of the idols of your desires, let them fall at once to the ground; let the palms rise in triumph, and the flowers of virtue bloom; let the fountains of grace burst forth, and the true God be praised and adored.

SECOND POINT.—AT THE TIME OF COMMUNION.

A long and wearisome journey was that of the three pilgrims from Jerusalem to Egypt, and worse still was the reception which they met, for they suffered all the inconveniences of the journey, and they had not the comforts of rest. No one cared to house them, because they saw them so poor, and strangers; and if even amongst their relations and acquaintances they had found no shelter, what must it have been amongst foreigners to whom they were entirely unknown! They shrank away from them as from adventurers, saying: 'They must have had some reason for flying away from their country.' It would have been better had they said, 'from their heaven.' They feared lest they came to rob them of their goods, they who came to possess their hearts. They looked upon them as outcasts, and as they understood not the motive, so they suspected the worst. They knew not the hidden treasure nor the concealed good that came to them—rather they were fearful lest they came to rob them of land, He who came to give them heaven itself. 'Where will the pilgrim Child-God be sheltered? Where will He go?'

O Man! to your heart He appeals; your bosom does He choose for His abode. You who know Him receive Him. Oh, He comes weeping; let your bowels be moved to compassion. The Egyptians have rudely shut the doors in their faces; do you open wide the doors of your hearts. Listen! He calls at your door with tears and with sighs. Hush Him with tenderness. Banished does He come from the bosom of the Father into your breast. Reflect, What should be the welcome? From the wings of the Cherubim He is transported to the wings of your heart, and therefore a cold, indifferent welcome is not sufficient. He comes in a white robe, for His colour is purity. Give Him shelter in the midst of your soul in emulation of Heaven itself.

THIRD POINT.—AFTER COMMUNION.

For seven years were the citizens of heaven banished to Egypt—how unknown to men! how attended by the Angels! But how little profit did the Egyptians derive during all that time from their company! Thus the Lord left them as He had found them; and so does it occur to many when they communicate. The amiability of the Child-God, the gentleness of the Virgin, or the good manners of St. Joseph, were not sufficient to win them over, for they were as hapless as they had been ungrateful; and if they ate the gods which they adored, or invested with deity the things which they ate, well might they at least have adored as a God that God Who was to give Himself to them as food.

Reflect how many there are who receive the Lord in this manner, who do not attend on Him, or pay Him homage. He comes in and goes out, and they derive not the profit which they might. They are deeply ingulfed in their Egypt, wedded to the world, and so they perceive not the goods that are eternal. But do not you receive the Lord in the fashion of Egypt, for you know Him in a heavenly manner. Enkindle your faith, and recognise Him, for though He comes so meekly, He is the King of the Celestial Jerusalem. Endeavour not to lose the fruit, not of seven hours only, but of seven years of His residence in your breast, and even of your whole life, employing it all in Communion as fervent as they be frequent.

FOURTH POINT.—IN THANKSGIVING.

The Egyptians manifest no sign of sorrow at seeing that the Child-God is going away and leaving them; they do not implore Him to remain, they who had no desire that He should have come amongst them at all. They feel not His departure, who neither cared for His coming nor appreciated His assistance. I would not that you who have welcomed that same Lord to-day should be so unfortunate and ungrateful. Oh! what little trace abides in some souls to show that the Lord has dwelt with them! How little remains of the sweet odour of God! and how much of the world! What little profit do they draw from their Communion, when they could have gleaned so much that is heavenly!

Endeavour ever to keep bright and fresh the memory of the visit, and the abiding of this Lord within your heart ; keep your will full of affection, and your understanding full of grateful recognition. Oh ! how lovely a Child you received ! Take care that He does not go from you, remain deeply loving and impressed with His sweet Presence. Sigh to receive Him again, and if the first time you did not know Him, endeavour to learn how to enjoy Him in subsequent Communions.

THIRTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

The marriage feast of Cana applied to the Communion.

FIRST POINT.—BEFORE COMMUNION.

CONSIDER that if in other marriage feasts everything has the odour of worldly profanity, in this one everything was characterized by heavenly dispositions. It was a pious thought of the bride and bridegroom to invite the Saviour, in order that beginning with virtue they might secure their progress in happiness. Nor did they forget His most holy Mother, thus securing, indeed, the Star of bliss. The Apostles also assisted, which was a stirring proof of the rich charity of the bride and bridegroom, who, while lacking material opulence, nevertheless overflowed with the spirit of generosity. This disposition in those who were to receive Jesus, and to seat Him at their table, was glorious for meriting His mercies—the merit being the greater, inasmuch as they had so little experience of the wonders of Christ; for they had not yet seen Him work a single miracle, and they deserved that His first one should be done in their regard.

If to-day you are welcoming into your home and into your bosom that same Jesus, Who is your

Lord and Master, and your every remedy, the spouse and invited guest to the marriage of your soul, reflect that it is necessary to furnish yourself with as many virtues as they did, beginning with a lively faith, followed by an ardent charity and a firm confidence, which may induce Him to work in you similar wonders.

SECOND POINT.—AT THE TIME OF COMMUNION.

It is a deep subject of consideration that in the midst of the feast the wine should fail, and with it the joy signified by it. Such is the usual bitterness of all earthly pleasures which disappear in an instant, leaving the honey on the lips, but gall in the heart, inviting with wine and filling with poison. The pious ones of Cana rush to obtain the delights of heaven, which are true and everlasting, by making the Mother their Mediatrix. This was a great means for securing the mercies of her Son, for it is not said that they spent time or words in representing their necessities to this Lady, because as she was compassionate, it was sufficient that she should be made aware of their present need. They applied to Mary, and Mary applied to Jesus, which is in the order of Divine Providence.

To-day, my soul, like the spouses of Cana, hasten in search of those celestial comforts whose fountain flows here on the Altar—a fountain which, besides producing the best of all wine, possesses the excellence of being perennial, and though it appears new, is eternal. Leave the false pleasures of the earth,

ere they leave you. Remember that when least you imagine it they disappear, and God only remains ; worldly pleasures do not fill, but this Divine food alone it is which satisfies.

THIRD POINT.—AFTER COMMUNION.

The Lord, Who is ever compassionate, and is now won over by the prayer of His Mother, quickly makes a commencement of His Divine wonders, as well as of His remedies for man. He turns water into wine—that is to say, changes the tastelessness of the things of this world into the consolations of heaven. The wine was generous, because it was a symbol of this Divine Sacrament, and a gift from His generous Hands, for gifts from God are always perfect. As the guests one and all began to obtain the miraculous wine, they joined in its praise, not wasting a drop, everyone tasting it, and wondering, so that all remained satisfied with a feast which had finished with so good a relish.

Reflect that to-day the Lord works a far more miraculous favour for the guests invited to His Table, and one much more delicious in its flavour ; taste and see how much richer is the wine which He this day offers you. That other wine was the result of His Omnipotence ; the wine He offers you here is the work of His Infinite Love. In the marriage of Cana the Lord bade the servants fill the water-pots with water ; but here He lays open His side for you to drink from that Fountain of His Precious Blood, and if the Bride of the Canticles so greatly

prized having been brought by the King into the storerooms of His wines—namely, the Divine consolations—how much more ought you to acknowledge the favour of His having opened for you to-day the ever-flowing fountains of His precious Blood. Come with thirst, beloved souls! drink and be inebriated with Divine love, and say with the chief steward, ‘Oh, who would not have come to this table long before now! Oh, who would not have frequented this divinest of Sacraments from the very beginning of his life, and time after time!’

FOURTH POINT.—IN THANKSGIVING.

Grateful thanks to its Author were the effects produced by this excellent wine. No sooner did the guests know of this prodigy than they published it abroad. But the bridal pair, feeling as powerless to offer a sufficient acknowledgment as they felt thankful for the favour conferred, corresponded to the marvel by reiterated thanksgivings to Christ. The guests also thanked with loud praises, and with good reason, because a wine so generous, which produces the chastest lilies, should be proclaimed on earth and in heaven. Amongst the whole company, Mary, who was the first discoverer of purity, returned thanks on behalf of all for having received on that day such a favour in recompense for the streams of purest milk which she had ministered to her Son.

My Soul! In order that this Lady may assist you to work out so many advantageous favours,

supplicate her by increased thankfulness; for the greatest of all marvels in perfection are not fulfilled without especial praises of thanksgiving. Oh! that gratitude would correspond to grace! for, indeed if that miracle was the first of the signs of Christ, this Blessed Sacrament of His love is the seal of His affections and the triumph of His love.

THIRTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

Receiving the lost Child-Jesus, Who is found on the altar.

FIRST POINT.—BEFORE COMMUNION.

MEDITATE to-day how afflicted such a Mother must be without her Son—and such a son! She is as disconsolate as she is lonely, the loneliness she endures of itself doubling her sorrow because she misses Him Who is to be her consolation for all other losses. She cannot rest, for without Jesus there is no being satisfied; she can take no comfort, for there is nothing which can supply for the want of God. It is said that eyes which see not do not break the heart, but here she sees not, and her eyes are fountains of tears, because their light is wanting; she breaks out in tender sighs—enticements for her absent God; she well knows the value of what she has lost, and thus employs all her diligence in seeking Him.

Reflect, my soul, that if merely losing Jesus from her sight caused the Mother such great grief, what sorrow can suffice for the loss of Him and His grace? And even should your unhappiness not be so great as to have lost Him altogether, neverthe-

less weep that He should have absented Himself from you through your own tepidity. Hasten forth quickly on the wings of desire in search of Him; call Him with sighs—let it cost you at least a tear to find Him; and if the Virgin had no rest until she had found Him, do you, when you have found Him, receive Him and rest in the sleep of contemplation.

SECOND POINT.—AT THE TIME OF COMMUNION.

The Virgin Mother went out seeking her Child-God, as much desired as He was loved. She sought Him, not like the spouse on the couch of His rest, but amongst the mountains of myrrh. She goes, that solitary dove, in search of her absent Love. His voice has been heard in the land, for the time of mortification has come. Bleating goes that guileless ewe-lamb, asking for the lambkin of God, for once before had Herod, that cruel wolf, desired to devour Him. She questions His relations and acquaintances, for they ought to be able to give some tidings of Him. Then she hastens to the Temple, and she has judged rightly, for a good son is sure to be found in the house of his good Father.

Learn, Soul, this discipline and the manner of finding God. You will not meet with Him in the noise of the streets, and still less in the bustle of the market-places, nor among worldly friendships or relations, but in the Temple, which is the house of prayer. Let, then, the Church be your centre, seek Him in the Tabernacles, for there His love keeps Him imprisoned. Let your pleasures cost you tears,

and your comforts sorrow ; call Him with sighs, and you will obtain His favours.

THIRD POINT.—AFTER COMMUNION.

The Virgin enters the Temple, and discovers in the midst of the doctors the Wisdom of the Father. Her joy has now repaid her sorrow. Blessed are they who weep, for they shall be richly consoled. The rising Sun wiped the tears of the Aurora, calming that deluge of tears when the Ark of peace appeared. Great is the joy of finding God at the moment that He is recognised by the one who desires Him. What a tender embrace did she give Him ! How she must have pressed Him to her bosom, saying with the spouse, ' A bundle of myrrh was my Beloved when lost, now as a nosegay of flowers between my breasts will He ever abide !' Three days did it cost her to find Him, and in them she poured out thousands of sighs, tears, searchings, prayers and sorrows, that she might better appreciate the treasure she had found. Reflect, my soul, that it does not cost you so much to find this Lord, for you have Him whensoever you wish, and always on the Altar ; see how near at hand He is, and to your mouth. But I would not wish that this very facility of finding Him should be an occasion for you to undervalue the gift ; I speak not now of losing Him. Receive Him then to-day with the affection and tenderness of His most holy Mother ; seal your lips on Him, for you are not only permitted to adore Him, but to feed upon Him ; not only

to embrace but to receive Him as food, keep Him within your heart and enclose Him in it. Repeat with the Spouse: 'A bundle of myrrh is my Beloved to me; between my breasts He will abide'—the one being the understanding, the other the will; the one contemplating Him, the other ardently loving Him.

FOURTH POINT.—IN THANKSGIVING.

The Virgin Mother, being ever as grateful as she was gracious, must have returned intoning a new canticle to God for having restored to her again her beloved Jesus. She flew on the wings of a loving heart, and she returned with the cries of a grateful throat, praising the mercies of the Lord, congratulating herself with the Angels on her happiness in having found the Grace of all graces, and the Fountain of them all. How jealously must she for the future have watched and guarded her Child-God, never losing sight of Him, and forestalling by thankfulness the risk of losing Him again!

Oh, my soul, you who to-day have found this same Lord on the Altar, attended by pure souls joined with the Angels, surrounded by wise Cherubim in place of the doctors, you who find yourself with the Child-God within your bosom, what canticles should you not sing! Let your appreciation of the treasure found be known by your gratitude; be not ungrateful if you do not wish to be unhappy. Take care that you do not lose Him again, thus incurring the risk of losing Him for ever; keep Him within your heart, for He is all your riches; be careful not to open its doors to sin, for this would rob you of Him.

THIRTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

On the banquet in the desert where the Angels ministered to the Lord, applied to the Sacrament.

FIRST POINT.—BEFORE COMMUNION.

CONTEMPLATE Christ our good, how He retires from the noise of the world to commune with His Eternal Father, fasting forty days, to teach us to join mortification with prayer, the two wings with which to fly to the kingdom of God. For what the body lacks in food is replenished in the spirit by Divine consolations. How good a preparation is this of prayer and fasting—desert and heaven, austerity and contemplation—for meriting the favour which the Eternal Father sends Him, and which the Angels bring, as they also bring it to those who live like the Angels!

Study, soul, what that is which your Divine Master is teaching you by His example. It is necessary to furnish yourself with the safeguard of virtues in order that you may sit at the table of His delights. Fly from men that Angels may favour you; let your conversation be in Heaven, for you are nourished with its Bread; deny yourself the viands of earth that you may with greater relish

enjoy celestial food. Seek to obtain a great love of retirement, of prayer, of mortification, of austerity of life, and you will enjoy with delight this Divine banquet.

SECOND POINT.—AT THE TIME OF COMMUNION.

Not only was the reception of the gifts of Heaven preceded by a fast of so many days, but by the achievement of three signal victories against the three greatest of enemies, thus teaching us that we ought to conquer before communicating, and that victory goes before the triumphal celebration. Let the flesh with its feastings be conquered, the world with its riches, and the devil with his pride; let our whole lives be a victory over the delights of interest and pride.

The Lord did not accept the false invitation of the devil, and so He obtained that Angels should minister to Him: the one offered Him stones for bread, and these presented Him with bread instead of stones. Let him be seated at the King's table who has conquered kings.

Consider yourself to-day in the desert of this world, and invited to the Bread of Heaven. It is at the King's table that you are to be seated; examine, therefore, whether you have conquered kings, the vices which have reigned in you. Approach not fettered with the irons of the captive to the table of the liberty of the Son of God. He who is to feast with God, and of God, is not to come filled with the food of the world, for you would not

relish the bread of Angels if you came gorged with the stones of Satan.

THIRD POINT.—AFTER COMMUNION.

The Son of God suffered hunger as a man, but the Eternal Father, Who sent His prophet a loaf of bread by a raven, to-day sends His beloved Son food by His winged ministers. What food this was is not mentioned; that remains for your contemplation. Assuredly bread would not be wanting where Angels intervene; moreover, where there is a famished Son, and one so beloved, this Divine Father would have far surpassed the father of the Prodigal. But however dainty that food of Angels might have been, it never could equal that which is offered you to-day by the Lord of the Angels Himself, for He has invited you, and He bestows Himself on you as food.

Reflect with what joy would you have sat at the side of the Lord in the desert, with what delight would you have partaken of that bread which came down from Heaven; but animate your faith, and comprehend that here you possess the same Lord—with Him you eat, and of Him. He is the One Who invites you, and He is Himself the banquet. Oh that you would partake of Him as hungrily as the Lord hungers for your heart! Behold, it is a gift of Heaven; eat it with zest—eat like an angel, for the Angels serve you, envying you whilst they are serving you.

FOURTH POINT.—IN THANKSGIVING.

The Lord returned thanks as a Son to Him Who had proved Himself so good a Father—by eternal gratitude to One Who was eternal and perfect, by gratitude also to One Who was so liberal. Raising His eyes to Heaven, as He had done at other times, and elevating those of His Soul, He fixed them on those liberal hands of His Father, celebrating desire with power, whilst the understanding comprehended how to value with accuracy what it perceived; and the will attaining its object by ceaseless acts of affection, He would intone hymns which the angelic choirs would continue, employing all His strength and power in returning thanks for the benefits of which all had partaken.

Imitate, O my soul, this Lord, in giving thanks, for in receiving favours He thanks the Eternal Father for having treated you as a son. Let many canticles of praise resound in a mouth which has received the Eternal Word as its nourishment, filling your heart with gratitude, and let your lips speak from the abundance of your heart, showing throughout all your powers the vigour which they have derived from this Divine food.

THIRTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

On receiving the Lord with the triumphal palms.

FIRST POINT.—BEFORE COMMUNION.

MARK how the humble ones go out to receive the humble Jesus, the poor to meet the poor One, the children, the lowly, and the meek to greet the Lamb, all bearing olive-branches prophesying peace, and with palms announcing victory. The rich ones do not venture out, being detained by the manacles of gold, nor the proud, who worship the idol of their vanity, nor the luxurious, whose god is their belly. The humble are those who shall bear away the palm, and even heaven itself; they strew their garments on the ground, that the Lord may tread on them, for the poor, as a rule, give more in their poverty to God than the rich, who bestow most on the world.

The Lord perfects His praise in the voices of the little ones, who, still with the milk of guilelessness on their lips, speak the truth, flattery being far from them; in this manner, all the triumph of Christ is composed of humility, poverty, innocence, guilelessness, and truth. O soul! you who are to receive the same Lord in your breast, be careful to

meet Him with the triumph of virtues, for there is no disposition more acceptable to the affability of a God made man than the humility of the Apostles, the simplicity of a lowly woman, the innocence of children, and the poverty of a few fishermen.

SECOND POINT.—AT THE TIME OF COMMUNION.

‘Who is this One that cometh in with so noisy a retinue?’ demand the proud ones; and the humble, who know Him better, reply: ‘This is Jesus, He of Nazareth.’ They would have given a sufficient answer if they had said ‘Saviour and beautiful’; but let the Royal Prophet respond and exclaim: ‘This One Who comes riding on an ass is the One enthroned on the wings of the cherubim.’ Let the Spouse speak: ‘This fair One in His robe of innocence, and ruddy with His charity, is the chosen amongst thousands.’ Let St. Paul speak and say: ‘This One to whom the people do homage is the adored One of the Angelic choirs.’ Let Isaias exclaim: ‘This One Who is surrounded by infants is the God of armies.’

But you, O my soul, demand: ‘Who is this Lord, Who to-day comes entering into the recesses of my breast, triumphing into my heart?’ Listen to faith who answers you: ‘This One Who comes enclosed in a host is that boundless God Who is not contained in the universe;’ this One Who enters under the veil of the accidents is the mirror in which the Eternal Father delights to see Himself reflected; this One Whom all your powers adore is the One

Whom the winged hierarchy worship. If the people from the towns who knew Him not thus court Him, if the children thus receive Him with acclamations, with what adornment then should you receive Him, with what splendour place Him on the throne of your heart !

THIRD POINT.—AFTER COMMUNION.

The whole city was moved, some admiring the triumph, others lauding it; let then your whole interior be moved, the understanding by admiration, the will by ardour; let your heart be filled with joy, and your interior with tenderness; let your tongue break out in cries, and clap your hands. If there they strewed their garments on the ground, do you cast the surroundings of your heart at His feet. There they waved to and fro hallowed palms; do you raise the victorious palms of your vanquished passions, sprays of interior peace. The tender infants left the breasts of their mothers, and with lisping tongues praised their Creator; do you renounce the breast of your unnatural stepmother the world, and employ your lips in song, saying: 'Blessed be Thou, my King and my Lord, Who cometh triumphing in the Name of the Lord; be Thou as welcomed in my interior as Thou art desired of my heart—the triumph of my soul and all its powers, consecrating them anew to-day to Thy greater praise and homage.'

FOURTH POINT.—IN THANKSGIVING.

But, alas! after having been so acclaimed by all, Christ was received by none; no one was found to offer Him even a corner in their homes, nor a place at their tables; all their praise ended in exclamations, none extended to deeds. They abandoned Him in His necessity—yea, those very persons who had joined Him in His triumph: and in an instant all the children had disappeared, not a single one remained. Thus in a moment do all human favours vanish; the Lord alone remains in His Father's house, which is ever open to His children.

Oh what a good occasion, my soul, this is for you to approach and offer Him your lowly abode! You received Him with applause, then court Him with perseverance. Offer Him your house, for being so great a King, He will send the food and seat you at His side, and in place of the milk of infancy which you left, He will give you the wine of the strength of manhood. Let the mouth that has been closed to profane delights be opened to the Divine praises, and the tongue which has received Him be constantly employed extolling Him; let your taste correspond with a just thankfulness. Be not you amongst those who to-day receive Him in triumph, and to-morrow drag Him forth to crucify Him.

FORTIETH MEDITATION.

In which is compared the good disposition of St. John with the bad disposition of Judas at the Lord's Supper.

FIRST POINT.—BEFORE COMMUNION.

MEDITATE on the evil disposition with which Judas approached the sacred Communion, and how well prepared was St. John. The first was an infidel and a traitor, whose interior repelled its food, whilst the beloved John and faithful disciple rested his head on his Master's breast. Judas, blinded by his cupidity, bargains to sell the bread of Angels to the devils; but vigilant John, with his eagle eyes, guards it as he gazes in contemplation on that best of bosoms. Judas barter the food, exchanging the most Divine of favours for the most inhuman of all ingratitude, and John remains tranquil, reposing on the breast of his Master.

Reflect how often have you approached the sacred Communion like Judas, and how seldom like John; how desirous of terrestrial goods, how given up to vile pleasures! With treachery in your body, bartering for a vile interest, an infamous revenge, a filthy desire, the riches of all the heavens, the Lamb of God, the joy of the Angels. Take warning, and

endeavour for the future to approach, not perfidiously, like Judas, but like John, true valuer of the Divine favours, obtaining happiness, and enjoying its gifts.

SECOND POINT.—AT THE TIME OF COMMUNION.

Judas, when he has enclosed the Lamb of God in his impious interior, goes out and barter a heaven for a hell. He reposes not like John, for there is no rest in sin; and from having been made a favoured disciple of the Lord, he becomes a leader of His enemies. He goes out from amongst the greatest friends, and proceeds to His enemies. To such extremes does he reach who falls from so high a position. 'What will you give me for that Man?' he asks them; 'for little indeed will I sell Him to you. Give me what you choose, and He shall be yours.' And His enemies would make answer: 'As to His worth, He would be dear at any price.'

Ponder on the incredible depreciation of God which sinners make of Him; how little do they estimate how much He is worth! They prefer a vile pleasure, even a Barabbas, which is saying much, and this occurs every day. Imagine yourself, my soul! approaching Judas, and that you say to him: 'Sell Him to me, traitor, and I will pay you with my soul and with my life. I will give everything and all that I am, for He is my God and my All. I know what He is worth, and of what value He is to me!' My soul, purchase Him at any price! But, ah! you have not to buy Him, for He is given you gratis as Bread. Come and buy, without money,

the food that is priceless, but beware that you do not sell It at the price of a gratification, thus returning to the vomit of your sins.

THIRD POINT.—AFTER COMMUNION.

Compare now the Saviour's infinite goodness with the enormous iniquity of Judas, His benignity with his ingratitude, His meekness with his brutality. Judas approaches the garden, which, if it had flowers before, is now full of thorns. Having become the leader of the executioners, and the worst amongst the wicked, he goes advancing near to Jesus with the body, though widening still more his distance from Him in the spirit, and audaciously touches His Divine countenance with his filthy, polluted lips. Oh, cheeks so basely used, which the Angels desire to behold! He denies him not His face, He Who had given Himself to him for food. He loathes not that vile mouth, He Who had entered the very recesses of his frame, rather with the affability of a lamb, He calls Him 'Friend,' a greeting which ought to have softened a diamond, and even humanized a tiger; but oh, hardness of the obstinate sinner! 'Friend,' He says, 'for what art thou come?' Judas was unable to answer, and knew not what to say.

Soul, when you communicate, reflect that He asks you, saying: 'Friend, for what comest thou? to receive Me or to sell Me? Dost thou come like the beloved John or like the traitor Judas?' What do you answer? what does your conscience tell you? Consider that the Lord whom you possess here in

this host is the same One Who was in the garden, and that not only do you come to kiss, but to receive and feed on Him. Beware you do not approach inimically, but lovingly, not to bind Him, but to imprison Him in your heart ; not to throw a halter on His neck and hands, but the bands of love. Endeavour to come with a loving reverence and a faithful joy to receive and carry away this meekest of Lambs.

FOURTH POINT.—IN THANKSGIVING.

Judas did not return thanks after this sacred Supper—he who had eaten sacrilegiously. How could he be grateful who was a dissembler ? He sold the bread of friendship to his greatest enemies, which was to throw it to raving dogs, the most precious pearl to the filthiest swine ; but the end of all this is much to be pondered upon, for he elected to punish himself, being the executioner of his own body, he who had been the executioner of his own soul.

Consider how the first unworthy communicant was punished, paying for it with his life. Let his punishment be your warning ; resolve to be grateful and you will be pardoned ; loosen your throat that it may pour forth due praises ; let the lips that have been imprinted on the cheeks of Christ with true signs of peace be opened wide on the day of your Communion in devout canticles of gratitude. Do not seek the door with the Lord in your bosom, like Judas, but calm yourself, and repose in contemplation like the beloved disciple.

FORTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

On some of the stages of the Sacred Passion applied to Holy Communion.

FIRST POINT.—BEFORE COMMUNION.

CONSIDER how Christ our Lord, on that memorable night of His leaving us, being lovingly desirous of remaining with men, and wishing to perpetuate the memory of His Passion, found a means of satisfying His remembrance and His affection by eternizing His love and His sufferings in this marvellous Sacrament, so that it should ever be the centre of His perfections and a memorial of His Passion. He therefore charges all who receive it to renew the memory of how much He loved us, and also of all that He suffered.

Approach, therefore, oh you who are to communicate, and receive your God and Lord sacramentally in the midst of His favours and sorrows, tasting His sweetness in the midst of your deficiencies, He being most acceptable when most sorrowful, and the most loved by you in proportion as He was for your sake most cruelly treated. Contemplate Him in some passage of His sacred Passion, and receive Him at one time as watering

the garden with His blood and your soul with grace. Now bound, and His hands tied and fettered with the cruel cords of hatred; at other times, like a withering flower of the fields, His Divine cheeks dyed red with blows, that the roses on His cheeks might bloom as much as the thorns flourished on His head. Contemplate Him again, bound to a pillar, made a '*non plus ultra*' of His love and suffering, His body torn open with stripes, from which flowed a great deluge of blood, due to the cruel tempest of your iniquities, the scorned of men and the desired of Angels, that mirror without spot in which the Eternal Father is reflected, and on which He delights to gaze, being soiled with filthy spittle. Now carrying on His shoulders the tree, as Isaac bore the wood for the sacrifice; and, lastly, raised on a cross, with His arms ever open to pardon you, and nailed for your chastisement, His feet fixed to await you gently at your leisure, inclining His head and calling you unceasingly. In this manner, when you communicate, make a tender commemoration of His bitter Passion with your loving compassion.

SECOND POINT.—AT THE TIME OF COMMUNION.

Animate, therefore, your faith, and elevate your contemplation; for the same God and Lord Who then suffered in that passage, on which you may meditate, is really and truly the same Who is here in person in the Sacrament which you receive. It is the same Jesus, your every good, Who was on Calvary, that you enclose in your breast. Consider

that if you had found yourself there with the faith which you now possess, with the illumination which you obtain from the occasion of your present meditation, and the dolorous passage which you contemplate, with what love would you have approached your Lord! Although you might have had to tear your way in the midst of those inhuman executioners, with what tenderness would you have spoken to Him, what conversations would you have held! How you would have embraced Him! How you would have compassionated Him on His sufferings—and those undergone, too, for you! How you would have pressed Him in your embrace, and fled with Him from the cruelty of His torments, restoring Him to peace and rest within your breasts!

Oh, my soul, you who know as you believe that this is the same Lord as that One, do here what you would then have done there, remembering that you are still in time. Imagine when you communicate that you are come to the Garden, and that you wipe away the copious sweat of blood with the folds of your heart, that you approach the pillar, and that you sever His cords in order to encircle Him in your arms, healing His wounds by placing in each a piece of your heart. Imagine that you press His crowned Head to your bosom, even if its thorns pierce you, and that you seat Him on the throne of your heart; that you take Him from the arms of that Cross where He hangs with such love into your interior, wherein He may repose. Communicate at one time in the Garden, at another at the pillar, to-day in the street of bitterness, and to-

morrow on Calvary, enkindling with faith your devotion.

THIRD POINT.—AFTER COMMUNION.

Oh, how much you would have appreciated assisting at those dolorous episodes of your redemption! Oh, how highly you would have estimated your happiness, whatever pain you might have felt, at finding yourself present on all those occasions in which the Lord suffered! Oh, who would not have found themselves present, you repeat, again and again, with the affections which I now possess, at those dolorous steps of the Passion! But remark that you are not too late, and that you are even in timely season. Here you have the same Lord Who then suffered, and if He is not now enduring actual dolours, He represents them to you, that you may take compassion upon Him. And in case that you had been there, and had seen Him clothed in the white garment, everyone calling Him insane, you would have cried out, saying, 'He is no other than my Lover'; and if, when He fell at the foot of the pillar, weltering in the lake of His Blood, you would have stretched out in help your two hands to raise Him up when others wished to keep Him down. Behave now as you would have done then, just as if you had heard the High Priest from the Pretorium saying, 'Behold the man!' you would have cried out, 'My every good, He is my Spouse, my Beloved, my Creator, my Lord and Master!' And when no one desired Him, and when all were for exchanging Him for Barabbas, you would have

exclaimed: 'I desire Him, I yearn for Him! Give Him to me, for He is mine—my God and all my riches!' Have the same dispositions now.

Reflect that if in this manner you would have acted then, thus truly valuing your bliss, be grateful to-day for having approached the Sacred Communion; for if then you would have returned thanks for having received Him all bruised into your arms, oh, render Him greater thanks now for having placed Himself in your breast sacramentally. If you would have considered it a great favour to have touched and fervently adored those wounds, acknowledge now that you are still more highly favoured in being able to feed upon them. Appreciate the grace that instead of that bundle of myrrh resting in your arms, you now possess Him in the midst of your interior, not only pressing Him to your bosom, but within it, and in close union with your heart. In this manner approach the Holy Communion, receiving the Lord one day in this part of His Passion, another day in that—bound, scourged, spat upon, crowned, scorned, nailed, dead and buried in the new sepulchre of your bosom.

FORTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

On communicating with the freedom of Saint Thomas, who touched the side of Christ.

FIRST POINT.—BEFORE COMMUNION.

CONTEMPLATE this Apostle, how from his singularity he lost the Divine favour, and was cast out from all the community; for he who separates himself from the company of the good usually remains alone. In him faith had become tepid, and his charity had grown cold; he passed from tepidity into incredulity; for he who does not climb from virtue to virtue goes on slipping and being tossed from sin into sin. Blinded was Thomas in his soul because he saw not the resuscitated Sun in the red appearances of His beauteous wounds; he disbelieved their presence in His Master's body, and opened them in himself; he sought comfort for his short happiness, and for not having enjoyed the Lord's visit, through his little faith in not believing that He was risen. How bad a disposition was this for inducing Christ to repeat His favours! He little esteems those wounds who thus renews their pains, not remarking that he opens them wider the more he denies them.

Oh, my soul! how your tepidity competes with that of Thomas! Would that it did not exceed it! What bad preparation is yours for meriting to-day the visit of the Lord! If there He was a risen Christ, here He is sacramented; and while others are enjoying the fruits of peace, you remain in the war of the spirit. Enkindle your faith, animate your hope, and inflame your charity by fervent prayer.

•SECOND POINT.—AT THE TIME OF COMMUNION.

The Lord compassionating the incredulity of Thomas, after proving him for eight days in order to purify his desires, deigns to favour him in company with his brethren, for it mattered little that the doors of the Supper Chamber should be closed, when those of His wounds were so wide open, and His side so gashed. He enters into the midst of the Apostles as the Centre where all hearts were to rest; He fixes His eyes on Thomas so as to open those of his soul; He bids him come near, because, having been so far from the Divine fire, his spirit had become frozen; and He tells him to bring hither his hand, a sign that He had not ceased to hold him in His Hand. 'Put in thy finger into My side, and probe it, even until it reaches the Heart, for with its fire it will melt the ice of thy tepidity.' Ponder on the Redeemer's great mercy, Who to save souls receives His wounds again, and to-day to heal an Apostle renews those wounds. To tepid, cold Thomas He reveals them, yet to the fervent Mag-

dalen He had denied them, gentleness being for the weak, and trials for the strong.

Advert, soul, that you have within this Host the same Christ Who was so gloriously wounded. Listen to what He is telling you: 'Approach to Me, receive and touch Me, no longer with thy fingers, but with thy lips; not with thy hands, but with thy loving tongue, and in thy enamoured heart. Prove thy palate, and taste the savour of these wounds; seal those thirsty lips on the flowing fountain of My open side, satisfy the thirst of thy desires in this well-spring of consolations.' Animate your faith, and appreciate your happiness, for if Thomas attained to put his finger into the side of the Lord, here Christ, whole and entire, enters into your bosom. Do not lose this occasion; touch every one of His wounds, prizing such advantageous favours.

THIRD POINT.—AFTER COMMUNION.

The instant that Thomas touched the loadstone flint, Christ made fire flash from the iron of his incredulity into his heart and light into his eyes, opening those of his body to see His wounds and those of his soul to confess His Divinity. On beholding Christ, all wounded for his healing, Thomas becomes all tongue and mouth for confessing, crying out and exclaiming: 'My Lord and my God, I surrender, for Thou hast conquered my heart with Thy wounds, and I will proclaim that Thou art my Lord, my God, my King, my every good, and all my

delight, my God and all my riches, for in Thee is enclosed everything.'

Reflect that if Thomas, by touching the wounded side of our Lord, remained so full of joy, so changed, so fervent, how ardent and how changed should you remain when you have received Him, being all absorbed in God! for God in His entirety is in you. Confess Him, then, to be your God, your Creator, your Redeemer, your beginning, your centre and end, your every good, and the only goal of your desires.

FOURTH POINT.—IN THANKSGIVING.

How delighted and how often would Thomas return to enjoy those beautiful wounds if it were allowed him! How thirstily would he repeatedly come to those perennial fountains of consolation and of love!

Soul, this singular favour is reserved for you; frequent the Sacred Communion to-day and to-morrow and each day, for the Lord is waiting for you, to make you as happy as you could desire. Thomas remained singularly grateful for so especial a mercy, and he who in his incredulity contradicted everyone, now confessing faithfully, asks everyone to assist him in thanksgiving, as before he asked them to help him in believing. He proposes to confess Him until death, though he might have to do this with as many wounds as those which he had adored. Endeavour to be grateful, like Thomas, and even more so, having been more favoured, becoming all

mouth to praise Him, as you have been, and are, all mouth to receive Him, especially since He is a Lord Who has opened wide His side and His heart. Open your lips, that your heart, all dissolved, may come forth through your mouth in applause, and through your eyes in tears of tenderness.

FORTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

On inviting and receiving our Lord, as a pilgrim, like the two disciples of Emmaus.

FIRST POINT.—BEFORE COMMUNION.

CONTEMPLATE these two disciples, who, although doubtfully gathered together in the Name of the Lord, afterwards had Him standing in their midst, for the desire of God to converse with them was the allurement which brought Him. They went on talking of His Passion, and so they drew into their conversation the softest music which the harps of heaven could strike. But how badly disposed He finds them for receiving His favours, so distant were they from Him! But the Lord in pity approaches them, seeking those who wished to fly from Him. He beheld them cold in faith, broken down in their hopes, tepid in their charity; but He commences to warm their hearts with words of life, fanning their want of confidence into a flame, and instilling into them a new life.

Reflect, my soul! To-day you meet that same Lord on the road of your darkened life. If then He was as a pilgrim, here He is in a miraculous manner; if there He was disguised in His robes, here under

the Accidents of bread ; if then on the travel, here leisurely seated. How spiritless do you proceed in the path of virtue ! how tepid in the service of God ! Approach, then, to this Lord by prayer, that with the strokes of His inspirations He may kindle in your breast the fire of devotion. Speak of God the day you are with Him. A mouth that is to welcome Jesus is not to be occupied with aught else, or to speak words which are not godly. The soul that is to receive the Divine Word should come with virgin palate to taste the bread and wine which engenders virgins.

SECOND POINT.—AT THE TIME OF COMMUNION.

They had arrived close to the fortress of Emmaus, the end of their flight, and the Lord made as though He would go further, when He desired most to remain. He wished that their desires should constrain Him, and their pleadings oblige Him, though He Himself had voluntarily drawn near to them, for He desires to be implored in the progress of virtue, just as a mother compels her infant to walk by leaving it alone, that it may lose all fear. On seeing Him so human, when He was most Divine, they asked Him to remain with them, not inviting Him, as the world does, merely for compliment's sake, but with importunity. He answers them that He has far to go, for in retiring from a soul He goes far indeed, the distance being great from sin to God.

Arise quickly, my soul ! for the Divine Spouse passes to others more fortunate, because more fer-

vent; it is necessary to implore Him, for it is most important to detain Him. If these disciples, who knew Him not, thus esteemed Him, you who by faith know Who He is endeavour to receive Him tenderly. They judged Him to be a stranger; you know Him to belong to you. Beseech Him to enter, not only with you, under your roof, but within your very bosom; invite Him, for in the end it will be all at His cost, as He provides the food, you the desire; and thus you will obtain eternal life.

THIRD POINT.—AFTER COMMUNION.

The Lord quickly condescended, for His delight is to be with the children of men; they sit at the table with Christ in their midst, their joy equalling the favour. They place bread in His Hands, and rightly, for it was always found in them. Christ raised His eyes to Heaven, that it might be leavened bread and Divine; and on His breaking it, their eyes were opened, and they recognised Him as their Master, but in that instant He vanished from their sight, for in this life He is as a dart of lightning; and in the next He is the eternal Sun, being both light and consolation. He left them with honey on their lips, and that miraculous Bread as a substitute in His absence, leaving them envious at not having possessed the joy of knowing Him before, wishing that they had enjoyed and adored His glorified wounds, and caressed those Divine Feet. Oh, what embraces would they have given Him had they but known Him!

Remark that this same Lord you have really and truly on the table of the Altar, where He breaks and divides the Bread of Heaven. Delay not to recognise your happiness, for when you bethink yourself it may be too late, and you will remain mourning that you did not obtain Him before. Come near to the Lord, for He will not go from you as He did from the disciples, because His love has imprisoned Him; enjoy His Divine and corporal Presence, adore those pierced Feet, kiss those glorious, beauteous wounds, for He is expecting you, and for you He is waiting. Time and opportunity He gives you, that you may contemplate Him, love Him and receive Him.

FOURTH POINT.—IN THANKSGIVING.

The two disciples remained, divided between painful and joyful feelings, between the happiness of having seen their Master and their grief at losing Him so soon. Hardly seen when gone, they weighed well and justly the favour He had conferred on them, repeating the lessons which He had taught them; their hearts had burned with love when He left them, and now they are all tongue in gratitude at His return. They went back to reiterate with accurate words what He had told them, weighing in their minds both His penetrating power and His actions, and, above all, the celestial sweetness of His countenance. For many days would they speak of nothing else, and even on that same road would they trace their Master's footprints, following those

of His holy law. They returned to the place where the Apostles were, to give them news of their happiness, and to renew their enjoyment.

Learn, soul, how to return thanks to your Divine Master on the day in which you sit at His Table ; open your lips to sound His praises, as well as your eyes to know Him ; see whether it was not owing to your tepidity that you knew Him not before ; speak of nothing else for many days, your tongue ever and ever returning to the savour of your joy and the delight of your palate.

FORTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

On receiving, like Magdalen, the Lord as the gardener of
your soul.

FIRST POINT.—BEFORE COMMUNION.

CONTEMPLATE Magdalen, how anxiously she rises early, to seek an eclipsed Sun; love has taken possession of her, and gives her no peace; she is beside herself, being absorbed in her beloved Jesus; she is not where she moves, but where she loves. She, that most diligent of lovers, quickly leaves her bed, for it is hard for her to sleep who cannot even live. She finds no repose in any creature away from the centre of her Creator, and lives not, for she has parted from her life, though it was not said of her, as the world says of others who are dead and gone, that their love and affection finished with death, even towards those whom they loved so well. Hers extended beyond death, for, wounded with Divine love, and dead from sorrow to every object but her loss, she in her own person enters into the sepulchre of her Beloved.

Ponder what a good preparation this was of prayers and vigils, of tears and sighs, for finding a Lord Who died of love, and Who lives on acts of

endearing generosity. Arise early to-day, diligent soul, and seek this same Lord Who there proved His love for you, by bestowing on you His affectionate gifts. Do not seek Him beneath the stone of a sepulchre, but under a Host; not between the grave-clothes, but in the evidences of life. Weep over your errors, and sigh for His favours, and you will obtain the reward of your desire.

SECOND POINT.—AT THE TIME OF COMMUNION.

The Lord, attracted now no longer by the errors of a sinner, but by the refined gold of a lover, appears to her, repaying with mercies such extreme affection. He manifests Himself to her under the garb of a gardener because she is a 'Jesus blossom,' and He claims the right of gathering the virtue-fruits from those flowers of desires. He asks her why she weeps, and whom does she seek—He Who so well knew that He Himself was the object of her tears; but He glories in hearing her relate her grief. She answers as though the reason were something well known, for she believes that all must be thinking on the one subject which occupies her own thoughts. Nor is she deceived, for what else should our thoughts dwell upon except on God? or of what else can we speak but of God? She says not that she seeks a dead man, for even to think of it would be to die. 'Give Him back to me,' she says, 'and do not be astonished that I should be fearless, for if my strength fails me, my spirit is ever brave; there is no terror where there is love.'

Yet the Lord delays making Himself known to her, that He may listen to her multiplied desires.

My soul! consider that here you have the same Lord, the gardener of souls, which He waters with His Blood. He is here, disguised under the Accidents of bread, and listening to your affectionate expressions, and if His love conceals Him, let your faith discover Him; and if the Magdalen purposed to take Him away wrapped in His winding-sheet, do you bear Him away with you in His sacramental robe.

THIRD POINT.—AFTER COMMUNION.

The Divine Nazarene Gardener, full of joy at having seen her water His Feet a second time with the streams from her eyes, jewelling the roses of His wounds with the pearls formed from so copious a flood of tears, manifests Himself to her, calling her by her name. He said, 'Mary,' and she, like a ewe-lamb, but no longer lost, recognised the voice of her happily-found Shepherd, Who called her so benignly that she was able to comprehend His great mercy; so she fell lovingly at His feet, and if once before she had fallen there by the weight of her sins, this time it was under the load of her love, drawn like an importunate bee, by the fragrance emanating from His flowery wounds. But the Lord kept her back, saying: 'Do not come near, do not touch Me, for I am not yet ascended to My Father.' Let sorrows remain for thee, reserving for My Father the glory—let the thorns be for thee, the fragrant roses for Him.

Oh, my soul! comprehend your happiness, and endeavour to estimate it truly, for not only does He command you not to retire bashfully, but to approach lovingly. From Magdalen He conceals His wounds, but His wounds are His invitations to you; not only does He invite you to touch, but to feed on them. Listen, for He calls you with such lively demonstrations of pleasure that His goodness may attract you; and if He withdraws from you His grandeur, do not lose the taste of communicating, for you will make all eternity envious. Cast yourself at His feet, closely press those blossoming wounds, and instead of blood there will spring up the sweetest honey for you to eat, celestial nectar to regale you and nourish you.

FOURTH POINT.—IN THANKSGIVING.

Magdalen, from being favoured, passes to gratitude, and with her bosom overflowing with joy, she runs to tell the Apostles, desiring them to join her in returning thanks, and to enjoy equal favours with herself, congratulating with them on having found not one groat only, but five, and so precious that each one was worth a heaven. She would not be satisfied with this only, but she invited the celestial choirs, with their gifted tongues, to come and assist her to swell the Divine praises, meriting to hear all her life their grateful songs.

Consider that if for the favour of once attaining to see, though not to touch, those glorious wounds, to gaze on them, and not to kiss them, Magdalen

celebrates this happiness all the years of her life, and day by day, with the winged choirs, what should not you do, my soul—you who not only once, but many times, during so many years, and day by day, continued to receive the Lord entire, not merely kissing His wounds, but feeding on them. How often should you repeat each hour, and every instant, due thanks! Employ all your powers in choirs, to thank and magnify Him for such singular favours, and let your lips overflow in praises of these wounds, whose sweetness your heart has imbibed.

FORTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

On receiving the Lord as your King, Spouse, Physician, Captain, Judge, Pastor and Instructor.

THESE seven Meditations which are here put together, the Blessed Father Francis Borgia, when a priest, used to divide, to serve one for each day of the week. You may follow the same practice. And before he was ordained Priest he used to communicate every Sunday, employing the three previous days in preparation, and the three following in thanksgiving and drawing the fruits of the exercise.

FIRST POINT.—BEFORE COMMUNION.

When you receive the Lord as a King, meditate on the great preparations that you would make if you were to receive in your house, as a guest, a king of this earth. How much more and greater preparations should you make for receiving the King of Heaven, not only into your house, but into your breast! If you receive Him as the Divine Spouse, endeavour to adorn your soul with the splendours of grace, and the precious jewels of every virtue; if as a Physician, desire Him with as large desires as your needs are large. Let your longings awaken in

you dolours and sufferings, for He has already suffered for you, and drunk the bitter, searching draught of gall and vinegar to heal you of the grave maladies caused by your pleasures. If you receive Him as Captain (your whole life being a warfare), enlist under His colours, call upon Him to succour you, on beholding yourself besieged by such cruel enemies. If as Judge, divest your heart of every sin which may be a cause of offence to the rectitude of His Divine eyes; if as a Shepherd, call Him with the bleatings of sighs, that He may both rescue you from the fangs of the infernal wolf, and may nourish you on those luxuriant pastures which He watered with His very Blood. If you receive Him as an Instructor, acknowledge, in the first place, your ignorance, beseeching Him, Who is Infinite Wisdom, to teach you the great lesson of knowing Him, loving Him, and serving Him. Be this the preparation for each of these seven Meditations.

SECOND POINT.—AT THE TIME OF COMMUNION.

Advert that this Sovereign King is approaching the doors of your breast, which are your lips. He comes with benignity; let your soul go out resplendent to meet Him; ask Him for mercies, for He Who gives you Himself can deny you nothing. He arrives, that only Lover of your soul; run forth to receive Him with all your interior powers in the midst of desires and affections. The Divine Physician ascends, Who is health and medicine, the joy

of the sick, for He first suffered your pains ; lay them all before Him, one by one, demanding of Him the cure of all. He, the valiant Captain, marches on into your bosom ; surrender up to Him the stronghold of your soul, and do not become obstinate in your weaknesses. He takes possession of you—He, that rigorous Judge ; cast yourself at His Feet, confessing with humility your deep sinfulness, and you will obtain the pardon of them. He comes, that Good Shepherd, seeking you ; hear His merciful calls ; follow Him with love, and take from His hand the Bread of Heaven. He enters in, that Divine Master, to sit on the throne of your heart ; listen to Him attentively, and be enthusiastic for His true doctrine.

THIRD POINT.—AFTER COMMUNION.

Obtain the favour which this great Monarch confers on you, for He is as desirous of bestowing as He is powerful to give. Learn how to ask of Him Who is so desirous of giving, for He can, and desires to give. Soul, closely embrace and hold your enamoured Spouse Who for you opened His side, and receive Him into yours. Many wounds have you caused Him ; draw from them His affections. Call Him your life, for He laid it down through the love of you. Apply the remedies which this great Physician brings you when from His own flesh and blood He makes the medicine. He was bled to give you health, and died to give you life. Follow your Captain, for in all your battles He ever marches

in the front. You will not lack bread, for He gives Himself to you in food. Fight bravely, for He will receive all the wounds instead of you. Do not desert His standard, even until the victory has been won.

Listen, my soul, and incline your ear to so wise a Master Who is the Wisdom of the Father, for He gives Himself to you in food that you may learn the better, just as one gives letters made of sugar to a child which is being taught the alphabet that it may master them with pleasure. In blood you will learn, yet not in your own, but in that of this same Master, for He bore the stripes on account of the lessons which you had not learned and knew not.

What quittance do you give so merciful a Judge Who willed to be sentenced for your sins? He Who knew not sin, nor was guile found in His mouth, bore the punishment of your wickedness. Ask of Him mercy, proposing a great amendment. He will not confiscate your goods; nay, on the contrary, in order that you may have food to eat, He gives you Himself as meat.

Join the fold of your Good Shepherd Who is at the same time your delicious pasture. For you He exposed Himself to the ravenous wolves, who feasted on His blood, even to the last drop, proving to you that He is not a hireling. With His very body He nourishes you, and on His shoulders He carries you to the sheepfold of His heaven.

FOURTH POINT.—IN THANKSGIVING.

Correspond gratefully to so generous a King, perpetuating His mercies by binding yourself to serve Him for ever. Obtain lovingly the favours of your Spouse, and endeavour to keep faithful, for it is a matter of nothing less than life, and that an eternal one. Repay with thankfulness such costly remedies, reserving your mouth with all its tastes for the proclamation of His praises. Let the Leader of Heaven hear the bleatings of your joys as you extol Him, and your Captain the applause that signalizes His triumph. Let your acclamation re-echo up to your wise Master, and let the best recommendation of His doctrine be to discourse upon it to your own profit. Present to this benign Judge your winged heart, as grateful for His mercy as you are contrite for your miseries, acknowledging that you live by Him, and that it is by His favour that you are not made a firebrand of hell, burning for all eternity.

FORTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

On receiving the Lord as your Creator, Redeemer, Glorifier,
and only Benefactor.

FIRST POINT.—BEFORE COMMUNION.

CONSIDER the reception which a friend meets with in the house of one who has received all that he possesses from him. How he lays all his riches at his feet, for he knows that they all came from his hand, considering everything as little compared with the much that he owes him. His only regret being that he should have received no more, so that he might have more with which to serve him ; confessing him to be his benefactor, and placing him at the head of all, he who had raised him from the dust of the earth.

Oh, you who communicate, tell me, Who is this Lord Whom to-day you receive in your breast ? See if it is the One to Whom you owe what you are. He drew you out of nothing, for he formed you, and for what ? to make much of you. Do not receive Him as into a stranger's house, for He built it with His own hands ; He gives you life, therefore employ it in serving Him ; He gives you a soul, employ it in loving Him. Receive Him as your only benefactor, open the eyes of faith and you will see in this Host,

the Lord Who created you ; place Him in your bosom, with many due titles ; take Him into your heart, for it is His ; let your understanding know Who He is, and you will love an end which is its own beginning. Above all, let your heart be confounded at having transformed into instruments of offence those very things which were the gifts of His liberality, and the favours of His infinite beneficence.

SECOND POINT.—AT THE TIME OF COMMUNION.

It is a little thing to give life to a person, but much to give up one's own life for him—to die that he may live ; and even this is little, but it is the utmost extremity of love when a benefactor dies for the person who kills him, redeems the one who sold him, and rescues him who betrayed him. Was ever such exceeding love seen ? It could be found only in an enamoured God.

O man ! He died for you, who have so much offended Him—a Lord for a vile slave of Satan ! Behold, to what extremes does this love reach—God, and to die ! Life and death, and this, moreover, for you, a despicable worm ! He allowed Himself to be wronged, that you might be honoured ; He was spat upon, that you might be washed clean ; He was reputed as a thief, He who gave Paradise to thieves, and who gives Himself to you in this Sacrament. He wished to part with everything, that He might win you—possession, life, honour, even to dying naked on a stake. He, this Divine lover of your soul, might well have sought other means for your remedy, but He chose the most costly to prove to you His surpassing love. He did not wish it ever

to be said of His affection that it *might* have been greater, that He *might* have done more. He saw Himself forsaken of His Father, that He might not abandon an ungrateful wretch of whom He had become enamoured. Receive Him, then, in this day's Communion, as the Redeemer of your soul, as the Saviour of your life, offer Him all that you have—possessions, honour, and life—to Him Who first gave them to you. Welcome into your heart Him Who gashed open His side to place you inside. Fill your mouth with the precious Blood of Him Who in His great thirst could not obtain a single drop of water to quench it. Sweeten your lips with the Blood of Him Whose mouth was embittered with gall, for the Lord omitted not one single thing which He could do for you. Do not you, then, leave a single thing undone in His holy service.

THIRD POINT.—AFTER COMMUNION.

Receive Him now as your eternal Glorifier, which will be to put the seal on His mercies, and to crown you with clemency. A great favour it was to have created you out of nothing, greater still to redeem you with all that He possessed ; to have made you a Christian and a Catholic, while others are unbelievers who would have served Him better, had they but known Him; to have borne with you, so great a sinner as you are ; to have justified you, and nourished you with His Body and Blood. Great indeed were all these favours, well worthy of every gratitude and acknowledgment ; but what crowns all these is, to have predestined you for His glory as you believe, and that He will actually glorify you as you hope.

Receive Him, then, as your last end, for He is your Alpha and Omega. He is the termination of your pilgrimage, the repose of your labours, the port of your salvation, and the centre of your felicity. Animate your faith, for the same One Whom you are to see in heaven, that very same Lord you really and truly possess enclosed in your breast as a pledge of His glory.

FOURTH POINT.—IN THANKSGIVING.

This divinest of Sacraments is styled 'Eucharist,' which means 'good grace,' because, since that is infinite grace which the Lord bestows on us, it solicits perpetual gratitude from the soul that communicates, and the only return for receiving Him once is to receive Him again. This is the greatest act of thanksgiving; nor is there any other means of repaying so many mercies, except to receive and communicate worthily, chalice for chalice, discharging your vows to the Lord by open praises, and before all His people. Nothing else then remains but a precious death in the Lord, after having received Him, since the best manner of returning thanks for a great gift of God is to receive another. You are submerged in benefits, therefore inundate yourself in His precious Blood, and you will return thanks as you should if you love Him, in proportion as you appreciate His value. In this way you may communicate various times, receiving the Lord one day as your Creator, and another as your Redeemer—if to-day as a Justifier, to-morrow as your Glorifier.

FORTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

For communicating on all the festivals of the Lord.

FIRST POINT.—BEFORE COMMUNION.

PONDER on the great happiness you would have experienced had you been present with the faith which you now possess at the mystery on which you may select for meditation. With what devotion would you have prepared yourself, and with what joy assisted! Reflect that had the Angel awakened you on that joyous night of His birth, how quickly would you have arisen, with what love have wished to enjoy the new-born Child-God! How you would have availed yourself of the opportunity of seeing and contemplating Him wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying on straw—Him Who is not contained in the heaven of heavens, Whose throne is on the wings of the cherubim—Him weeping, Who is the joy of the Angels! And on the day of His circumcision, how you would have mingled your tears with the drops of His Blood! With what consolation would you have gazed on that glimpse of heaven on Thabor! How early would you have risen on the morning of His resurrection, in company with the virginal, jewelled aurora, to see that glorious

Sun arise in the midst of the joyful refulgence of His wounds! With what devotional purity would you have robed yourself to climb the mountain on the day of the Lord's triumphant ascension! how your heart would have followed Him to the centre of the heavens! What gladness you would have enjoyed on all these occasions, and how fervently you would have assisted at all these mysteries. Arouse your faith, and understand that the identical Lord Whom then you would really and truly have seen and enjoyed is the same Person Whom you have here in this divinest of Sacraments. If then He was in a manger, now He is on an altar; if there He was wrapped in swaddling clothes, here He lies enveloped in the sacred Accidents; if then He was as grain amongst straw, here you receive and feed upon Him sacramented. If on Thabor you would have beheld Him arrayed in garments of snow, here you see Him vested in whiteness; if in the Ascension He was mantled with a cloud, here He is concealed in a Host. Endeavour to dispose yourself with equal devotion, for the reality is the same; enkindle your faith, and your love will be awakened; increase your fervour, so that it shall be not less than your bliss.

SECOND POINT.—AT THE TIME OF COMMUNION.

Ponder with what joyous tenderness would you have entered those gates of Bethlehem, so devoid of ornament, yet so full of consolation. With what loving reverence would you have approached that manger, and how, being moved to tenderness on

seeing a God made man, you would have ministered to Him with attention. With what affection you would have availed yourself of the favour, and not satisfied with merely gazing upon Him, you would have approached, full of pitiful love, to touch and embrace that sweet, tender Infant! Animate your faith, enliven your tepid confidence, and approach to-day, if not to the crib, to the altar. Be not satisfied with kissing and embracing Him, but come and eagerly feast upon Him; wrap Him in the folds of your heart, and press Him within your own breast. And if in the circumcision you saw Him shedding pearls of tears and rubies of blood, the precious ransom of your soul, how you would have compassionated Him! Doubtless but your heart, exceeding the diamond in hardness, would have been melted and broken with the Blood of that wounded Lamb, even to being dissolved through your eyes into tears. Collect to-day not a few drops of His Blood as then, but all of it, into your heart; and if then you would have hushed His cries by straining Him to your bosom, to-day place Him within it. If on Thabor you would have fainted away at seeing the Sun of Beauty, although you would then have only gazed upon Him from afar, make now your bosom into a Thabor, and your heart into a tabernacle, exclaiming with Saint Peter: 'Lord, it is good for us to be here, Thou in me, and I in Thee.' Here you have Him risen from the dead. Approach, in company with the Virgin Mother, to enjoy the fragrant roses of His wounds, recognising in those gashes of His flesh the brilliant

evidences of the Divinity. Not only does He permit you to touch and adore Him, but He allows you to introduce Him into your bosom. Detain Him then, all glorious as He was when He ascended to heaven, and conduct Him to your heart, for He will not retire from you as He departed then, but He will enter triumphantly into your interior. Be your bosom a heaven, awaken your faith, and you will renew the fruition of all these mysteries, for when you communicate you possess here really and truly the same Lord that you would have enjoyed and seen on all those occasions.

THIRD POINT.—AFTER COMMUNION.

Endeavour to draw from this communion all the profit which you would have derived had you been present at each of the mysteries which are being celebrated, for you have here now the same Lord, real and entire, as you would have had then ; ask of Him the same favours, learn how to ask from One Who knows also how to give. What recollections would be yours of having seen and enjoyed your God and Lord in each of these mysteries ! Let your joy to-day, then, be the same, for your bliss is equal, and what there you would have done in recounting what you had witnessed do to-day in giving thanks, for you are not enjoined to silence, as were the Apostles on Thabor, but rather to call forth your devotion by celebrating the Divine praises. ‘What shall I render to the Lord,’ said the Prophet King, ‘in return for so many mercies?’

Chalice for chalice—let this Communion be a thanksgiving for the last, as the last was a preparation for this. Who could have been found strong enough to draw you away from within the gates when once you had entered in with the shepherds? Who could have brought you down from the mount with the disciples? Who could have taken you with the Maries away from the sepulchre? Here you have all this on the Altar, and nearer, even in your very bosom. Calm yourself in meditation, and continue praising and glorifying the Lord. Amen.

FORTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

For communicating on all the festivals of the Saints.

FIRST POINT.—BEFORE COMMUNION.

IT would be an easy task, but too prolix, to arrange a special meditation for communicating on the Feast of each Saint. Each person, however, can choose any one of the proposed considerations which may best suit the day and the life of the particular Saint who is then commemorated. But should any soul feel that he could communicate with more devotion by meditating on some consideration more adapted to the Feast, he may select some passage or circumstance of the Saint's life which he may apply to the Holy Communion, arranging it in the form of a meditation in the following manner: Consider some especial favour which the Lord granted the Saint—for instance, if you communicate on the Feast of St. James the Great, reflect how Christ took him up with Him to Thabor and revealed to him His glory. Consider how much greater is the favour which the Saviour grants to you, for He not only allows you to stand by His side, but He enters into your breast; endeavour then, in imitation of Him, to dispose yourself by singular virtues for

obtaining equally singular favours. St. Matthew He called to follow Him, entering into his house and allowing him to invite Him. To-day that same Lord calls you, entering into your bosom, and inviting you with His beauteous body. Of St. Philip He demanded whence should they find the bread to feed the five thousand guests; to you He offers no difficulty, but bestows upon you the Bread from Heaven. How great was the delight of St. Andrew when he saw the Lord, and heard the Baptist say, 'Behold the Lamb of God!' following Him at once, and asking where He lived. Listen and hear the priest telling you the same when you approach to eat that same Lamb of God. Be joyful on account of your felicity on the Feast of St. Matthias, and prepare yourself as a vessel of election on the day of the Apostle St. Paul, for you are to bear on your breast not only the Name of the Lord but His Body. Endeavour, then, to dispose yourself like these just men who received the favours of the Lord, whilst you, more favoured still, receive the Lord Himself, the Fountain of all mercy.

SECOND POINT.—AT THE TIME OF COMMUNION.

Consider how greatly all these Saints appreciated the mercies of the Lord, and how well they profited by them; comprehend the singular favour which He does you to-day; learn how to enjoy and thank Him, casting yourself into the furnace of love like a Lawrence; for if he so prepared his body for God's Table, the Lord to-day prepares His own body to be

your food at the fire of His love. If Ignatius considered himself as wheat ground by the teeth of wild beasts to be made into bread, white and pure, the Lord gives Himself to you also as Bread, ground by His Passion, and prepared by His love. If St. Bartholomew served up his flayed body at an eternal banquet, the Lord presents to you His Body as meat. If James was nearly related to Christ and very like Him, you also are related to the Lord, for you are nourished with His Body and Blood. Endeavour, then, to be like Him in everything, and even to be one and the same thing with Him. If St. Joseph was the one most amply favoured, and whose bliss was the greatest, for he so often carried in his arms the Infant-God, do you, who take Him into your mouth and keep Him within your breast, grow in perfection as well as in favour. To St. Luke it was permitted to take a copy of God ; to you is given the original itself. Imprint Him, then, on the tissues of your heart.

THIRD POINT.—AFTER COMMUNION.

All these Saints rendered extraordinary thanks for such singular favours. Stephen cried out when he saw the heavens opened, and Christ standing clearly before him in the balconies of heaven ; do you also break out in praises on beholding Him within your breast. Laud Him with St. Theresa, for He has been espoused to your soul, and has adorned it with the precious jewels of virtue. If to Catherine He gave the ring of gold, to you He gives

the pledge of love. Be filled with admiration, as was St. Augustine, that the immense ocean of God should be contained within the small circle of your bosom. Magnify Him with St. Ignatius, that not only in Rome, but in every spot, He may be favourable and propitious to you. He Who imprinted on St. Francis the stigmata of His Wounds, and displayed to St. Bernard His open side, to-day gives Himself up entirely to you, imprinting Himself on your heart. Study, then, to appreciate your favour, and you will learn how to esteem it; endeavour to profit by it, and thank Him for all eternity of ages. Amen.

FORTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

Recapitulation of many other Meditations.

FOLLOWING the plan of the Meditations which have been proposed in this book, you may draw out many others for yourself, which, being the fruit of your own thoughts, and having cost you labour, will be more calculated to awaken in you greater devotion. Here is an example :

FIRST POINT.—BEFORE COMMUNION.

Consider the longings with which a child desires its mother's breast, and what efforts it makes to reach it ; being impelled by hunger and drawn by love, it cries aloud, making every endeavour until it obtains it. With the same desire are you to approach the Communion. Pantingly desire the fountains of living waters like the thirsty traveller ; search for the ripe grain like the diligent ant, and watch like the whelps for the crumbs that fall from their master's table. In this way should you prepare yourself with tears and sighs, with desires and works, with prayers and mortifications, for the sacred Communion ; for the greater and more intense are

the desires with which you approach, so much richer will be the fruits you will gather.

SECOND POINT.—AT THE TIME OF COMMUNION.

Reflect on the avidity with which the little lamb runs to its mother. Come to the Holy Communion with an equal eagerness, as your necessities are great, and with as much delight as knowledge. With the quickness of the chicken that takes the grain from the beak of its loving mother who calls it, do you run, nestling afterwards under the wings of the arms of Christ, ever extended on the Cross. Rush with the eagerness with which the thirsty, sick man takes the cup of cooling beverage. Approach with the consolation felt by the frozen traveller as he comes near the fire which is to warm him; enjoy, taste, eat, and be delighted with this Bread of Heaven, joining delight with possession, experiencing celestial joys, and deriving a multiplied profit.

THIRD POINT.—AFTER COMMUNION.

Render thanks to this Lord Who has nourished you with His Body and Blood. Salute Him many times, as the shipwrecked voyager salutes the land where he has found a harbour. Receive Him with acts of thanksgiving, as the poor beggar welcomes the piece of bread which is given him every day from the rich man's table, and for which he returns his blessings. Prostrate yourself as a ransomed captive at the feet of your only Redeemer. Receive the Lord as your father, brother, friendly mediator,

surety, sponsor, protector, guardian, as the sun which enlightens you, as the port which takes you in, as the asylum where you are sheltered, the centre of your rest, the beginning of all your riches, the nucleus of your happiness, and the end of your desires for all eternity. Amen.

FIFTIETH MEDITATION.

On receiving the Most Holy Sacrament as the Viaticum.

FIRST POINT.—BEFORE COMMUNION.

CONSIDER yourself, my brother, as leaving this mortal life for the eternal one, and take heed that for so long a journey an abundant provision in every way is necessary, especially of the Bread of life, for passing through your approaching death. From this world you will go into the next, from this bed to the tribunal of God. Consider, then, how you are to prepare yourself—by a good and entire confession and a fervent Holy Communion. ‘Arise and eat,’ as the Angel said to the prophet Elias, ‘for thou hast a long journey to make.’ Listen to the same words spoken to you by the Angel of a good confessor, who undeceives you as to your danger. My brother, raise your heart to God, from creatures to the Creator, from earth to heaven, from earthly things to heavenly ones, for you know not whether you will ever rise from this bed. Eat well, for a long, dangerous journey awaits you; know that you will tread through paths never before walked, through regions never before seen by you. Endeavour, then, to make this Communion with all the circumstances

which would belong to your viaticum, with as much perfection as though it were to be your last, bestowing upon it the whole of your devotion. Remember that you are bidding adieu to Communion ; let your love for this divinest Sacrament be manifested by the tenderness with which you receive it on this, for you, the last time. Fix on this white, pure mark those eyes which so soon are to be closed, never more to see in this mortal life. Let them to-day be overflowing fountains of tears ; those eyes which to-morrow are to be dried up, and that mouth which is so soon to be shut, never more to be opened, open it wide to-day, dilating it well, that it may be filled with the sweetness of this delicious food. Notice that it is hidden manna, and will sweeten the bitter draught of death which step by step is threatening you. Let that tongue give loud cries, asking for pardon, ere it be for ever stiffened to your palate ; that throat which is growing hoarse, let it break forth in sighs of sorrow ; that heart, so soon to be made the food of worms, let it be nourished with the Body of Christ ; that whole interior, which moment by moment is losing the breath of life, let it be comforted with this preparation for immortality. And as your whole self, my brother, is so soon to return into dust and ashes, endeavour to be so transformed into this sacramental Lord that in this manner He may remain in you and you in Him for an eternity of glory.

SECOND POINT.—AT THE TIME OF COMMUNION.

Arouse your faith, my brother, and consider that in this Host you receive that same Lord Who within a few hours will be your Judge; He comes now to you, and you later on will go to Him. This is He Who will take a strict account of all your life; from this bed you will be taken before His strict tribunal, but remark that now He invites you with His pardon. If He will terrify you then with the dreaded chastisement, here He allows Himself to be appeased with gifts. Present Him, then, with your contrite heart, filled with the sorrow of having offended Him; here He is conquered with tears; there no cries will avail. Cast yourself before this tribunal of His mercy, and do not await that of His justice. 'Eucharist,' it is called, which means 'grace and pardon.' Do not delay until the hour of His rigour. Here He is made so meek a Lamb that you eagerly feed upon Him; there He will be a Lion so fierce that He will tear you to pieces should He find you guilty. Here He is silent, and overlooks faults; there He will cry out with a loud voice fulminating severities. Throw yourself at His feet in time, for whilst we have time, says the Apostle, we are to work well the affair of our eternal salvation. Exclaim with the penitent King, 'Lord, great pardon do Thou grant me, according to Thy great mercy, and according to the great multitude of my sins' ('Miserere mei Deus secundum magnum misericordiam Tuam'). Strike your breast with the publican, saying, 'My Lord and my God, be propitious and

favourable to me, a miserable sinner' ('Domine propitius esto mihi peccatori'). Cry out with the blind man of Jericho, 'My Lord, that I may see Thine ever benign countenance, which the Angels desire to behold' ('Domine ut videam'). Confess your errors with the prodigal, 'My Father, Thou canst not deny me to be Thy son; I have sinned, I confess it, against Heaven and before Thee.' ('Pater peccavi in cœlum et coram te.') 'Receive me into Thy house; let there be a corner in heaven for me.' Give loud cries, with the woman of Canaan, 'Jesus, Son of David,' though you may more justly say, 'Jesus, Son of Mary, the Mother of Mercy, take compassion on this my soul, for the devil would ill-treat it' ('Jesu fili Mariæ misere mei quia anima mea male à demonio vexatur'). Ah, Lord! take pity, for he would devour it. Entreat and pray with the thief, 'Lord, remember me, who am also a thief—a thief of Thy mercies, now that Thou art in Thy Kingdom' ('Domine memento mei cum veneris in Regnum Tuum'). Lord, make me joyful with that sweetest of answers: 'Hodie,' this very day; 'mecum,' with Me; 'eris,' thou thyself shalt be; 'in paradiso,' in My glory. Amen.

THIRD POINT.—AFTER COMMUNION.

Now that you have received this Divine Lord sacramentally, placing Him within your breast, exclaim, my brother, with the holy old man, Simeon, 'Nunc dimittis servum Tuum Domine secundum verbum Tuum in pace' ('Now indeed, my Lord, I shall

die full of consolation, for I am in peace with Thee).’ Say with the prophet-king, ‘In pace in idipsum dormiam et requiescam’ (‘Lord, now I will sleep and rest in peace and in Thyself’). ‘From Thee in the Sacrament I shall go to Thee in Thy glory; from a God, received in my bosom, to a God Who will receive me in His heaven; and since here I have attained to being united to Thee in Holy Communion, there I hope to be united with Thee in Thy celestial bliss.’ Repeat with St. Paul, ‘Mihi vivere Christus est, et mori lucrum’ (‘My death is my gain, for in dying in Christ, I live to Christ’). Offer Him your soul with St. Stephen: ‘Domine Jesu accipe spiritum meum’ (‘Sweetest Jesus, and especially in this hour, Jesus and my Saviour, receive my spirit’). Say, also, with the same Jesus, ‘Pater in manus Tuas commendo spiritum meum’ (‘My Father and most beloved, into Thy hands I commend my spirit; from them it came, and into them it must return’). Listen to what He answers you: ‘Noli timere ego Protector tuus sum et merces tua magnanimis’ (‘Fear not, for I am thy Protector and thy Refuge, and the mercies which thou wilt receive from My hands will be great in every way’). ‘Do not fear on account of thy sins, for My mercies are manifold; ask and these shall be given to you, namely, pardon, grace, and eternal glory.’

FOURTH POINT.—IN THANKSGIVING.

After receiving so many favours, you may well render due thanks, and, like the dying swan which

then sings the most sweetly, sing to-day a new song, commencing it here, and continuing it eternally above in heaven. 'Misericordias Domine in eternum cantabo' ('For ever will I praise and bless so good a God'). If you can no longer do so with the tongue, speak with the heart. If your lips cannot move, move your wings of desire and your heart. Appreciate truly the favour which the King of Heaven grants, He Who has come to visit you here, that you may go to Him there. A pledge this is of His glory, for He has pledged Himself to come and bid you farewell sacramentally as a proof of His love for you, and that He will receive you in glory. He comes to your house that you may enter His heaven. Cry out with the Holy King: 'Lætatus sum in his, quæ dicta sunt mihi, in domum Domine ibimus' ('Oh, what good tidings have I had given me that to-day I am to go into the house of my Lord'). Conclude with the joyous words with which the humble St. Francis expired: 'Oh, how they are awaiting me, those attendants of the court of heaven, to admit me into their sweet company. I shall not go alone, but we shall go together, my soul being accompanied by the most Holy Virgin, my Mother and my Lady, by the Saint of my name, by my angel guardian, all my patron Saints, and my advocates.' Should you still be in your agony, place yourself before Christ crucified and compare yourself with Him, consoling yourself with Him. Consider that to your Lord in His greatest agony were given gall and vinegar, and in yours that same Lord has given you His own flesh and blood. He died in the arms of a hard cross,

and you expire in the arms of this same Lord ever extended for you. As for Christ, they opened His side with a cruel spear, and He has sealed your heart with the most Sacred Host. He inclines His head and displays His wounded side, saying : ' Enter by this door, which is ever open, into Paradise, there to praise, contemplate, see, love and enjoy your God and your Lord for all endless ages.' Amen.

Jesus, Jesus, Jesus and Mary be with me, now and for ever.

AMEN.

Laus Deo Semper !

THE END.

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